

# Margaret McMillan Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100384
<b>Local Authority</b>	Islington
<b>Inspection number</b>	335534
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jo Curd

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	0–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	95
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Stanton-Ife
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mary Hart
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Hornsey Rise London N19 3SF
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<b>Age group</b>	0–5
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 October 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	335534

**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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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors made 10 observations of children's learning and held discussions with governors, staff, parents, carers and children. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies and other documents, including the school improvement plan, documents relating to safeguarding, the curriculum and past activities, and questionnaires completed by 43 parents and carers.

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

- how well all groups of children learn and develop and the extent of their learning and development by the time they leave
- the effectiveness of provision, including teaching, curriculum and care
- how well leaders and managers, including governors, have understood, coped with and responded to the challenges and changes of the past five years
- the effectiveness of policies, practices and procedures to promote the safety and well-being of all the children

## Information about the school

This school was formed through the amalgamation of a nursery school, local authority day nursery and special needs nursery. Although it became a designated Children's Centre in 2004, plans for this are not yet fully finalised or implemented. Thirty per cent of places are reserved for children who have been referred there by the local authority predominantly due to their communication or behaviour difficulties. Six places are reserved for children who have complex and profound difficulties. These children, most of whom have difficulties with language or learning, are taught with their peers throughout the Nursery. Children come from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are White British and European. About a third of the children speak English as an additional language, currently most of these have Korean or Bengali as a first language. The Nursery has experienced considerable disruption, largely due to building developments and changes in budget over the last six years.

**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

This is a good school in which all children develop well and are cared for extremely well and with considerable warmth. A strong commitment from staff, including dedicated leaders and managers, has carried the Nursery through a long time of challenge and change. Their determination to minimise disruption to children has been successful and turned challenges into positive experiences for them ' for example, using builders and the construction of rooms to enrich rather than hinder children's understanding and experiences of life.

A commitment to 'real-life' situations and resources pervades the Nursery, making learning interesting and relevant. Day-care rooms are extremely homely, helping children to gain confidence and a desire to learn in a safe and stimulating, yet relaxed environment. Staff interact well with all the children. They create a safe environment while encouraging children's independence and curiosity to learn. The very extensive garden is used well in all weathers to promote development in all six areas of learning, including opportunities to run, climb, dig, cycle and slide. Such activities contribute well to children's physical development and health.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are very experienced and knowledgeable. Their deep commitment to Margaret McMillan's teaching and ethos, stressing beauty and order in the environment, resources and activities, has provided a secure and stable framework in this challenging time. Nearly all staff also adhere strongly to these principles, providing a consistency of approach throughout the Nursery. Pressures on time have meant that training and a shared understanding of the 'McMillan approach' has slightly lapsed recently and has not always been made as explicit as it could be. A very small minority of staff feel that there are occasional misunderstandings about practices, roles and responsibilities which sometimes slightly limit the effectiveness of their work. Middle managers have enabled their teams to maintain a strong and successful focus on provision for children. Governors are committed, knowledgeable and experienced. They support and challenge the Nursery well.

The Nursery has developed well since the last inspection. Two buildings are now linked, providing ample space for day care, Nursery education, parent groups and training. Although buildings and plans for the Children's Centre are not yet complete, the capacity for sustained improvement is judged as good because of the Nursery's successful track record, strength of leadership and management and the commitment of all staff.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all staff are fully aware of the

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Nursery's specific requirements, values and approaches so that they can all work together as effectively as possible.

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

**2**

All the children make good progress in their learning and development because of broad and engaging practical activities, excellent care and support, and a very conducive environment. Although children enter Nursery with a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding, overall these are lower than expected for this age because a relatively large proportion of children have additional needs. Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are supported effectively and both indoor and outdoor activities are practical and accessible. On one occasion, three young girls, two of whom had additional needs, were extremely well supported on a roundabout in the garden by a member of staff who gently rotated the roundabout and sang with them.

Children who learn more quickly benefit greatly from the vast range of activities that are engaging, challenging and open-ended. A small group of young children were seen in the 'home base', persevering in selecting and joining beautiful coloured wooden shapes together to form intricate, attractive patterns. This successfully helped their development of numbers, problem solving and counting, and creative skills. Children who speak English as an additional language benefit from the positive role models of their peers, the very effective verbal interaction and clear language of staff, and practical visual activities. There are no significant differences in the progress of any groups. Most children leave the Nursery with higher standards than expected for this age in all six areas of learning.

Children fully enjoy their time at Nursery. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Behaviour is outstanding, especially during the very orderly, relaxed mealtimes where all present sit around tables engaging in a highly pleasant and sociable occasion. The extensive curriculum, ample opportunities for outdoor play in a wonderfully inspiring garden, and opportunities to learn about and celebrate a variety of religious and cultural events, contribute to children's outstanding spiritual development. Children's friendly confident expressions and open manners indicate just how very safe they all feel. This is due to excellent relationships with staff and an excellent environment within which children learn to recognise risks and to take them confidently, such as riding bicycles and safely running up and down grass slopes. Children develop extremely positive attitudes to healthy lifestyles through eating regular freshly cooked balanced meals and engaging in vigorous active play outside. They take a full part in the shaping of their day and caring for the environment, choosing activities and helping to clean, tidy and wash up. They are all well prepared for later life and learning because of their good progress, high attainment, excellent behaviour and good levels of independence and confidence.

*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

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<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which children feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Children's behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

A large factor in the Nursery's effective provision is the strong commitment to creating a stimulating, orderly, and homely environment. This contributes well to children's welfare, learning and development. The gentle motion of a rocking chair in the 'baby room' adds to the relaxed atmosphere here while a wide range of resources provide good opportunities for children to explore and learn about the world around them. Older children in the day care 'home base' enjoyed cleaning furniture in preparation for a Divali party and children in Nursery classes investigated changes in and decomposition of food over time, washed up and watched the incubation of eggs. There are ample opportunities for children to work and play with adults and each other, and to pursue interests and learning on their own. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities, and between the provision of quiet wonder and stimulating activity. There are some excellent activities such as digging, climbing and exploring in the garden, imaginative craft and extensive role play. Opportunities for children to use information and communication technology (ICT) are currently limited because delivery of new equipment has been delayed.

Teaching is good because staff interact skilfully with children and activities are broad, balanced and well prepared. Occasional misunderstandings by a few staff about the Nursery's specific ethos and practice means that teaching is not always as good as it

<sup>1</sup> 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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could be. Welfare is excellent because staff are well trained, skilful and sensitive, and the adult to child ratio is high. An example of the Nursery's excellent care was the way in which an adult supported a three-year-old with global delay. The adult sat on the floor talking gently with her as she played in the role play area with a series of cups, bottles and lids. The adult supported her physically and spoke gently and reassuringly, using clear words and language to mirror her movement and actions. She then skilfully adapted her responses and adjusted resources to ensure the child had just enough success and challenge in her play. Other children joined in and interacted in a way that both supported and stretched the child appropriately.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders and managers have done a very good job in maintaining and sustaining good provision and outcomes during a lengthy period of exceptional challenge. Staff have worked diligently and effectively to minimise the impact of this on the provision for the children and to ensure that children of all backgrounds, abilities and needs make equal progress. Leaders and managers know their Nursery well. Pressures of building work and the new challenges of the Children's Centre have meant that the Nursery's specific ethos and approaches have not always been made as explicit as they could be. This has occasionally led to misunderstandings and occasionally reduced the effectiveness of some teaching.

Governors are experienced, knowledgeable and astute. Although they fulfil their duties well, their procedures for monitoring their own effectiveness are not as effective as their monitoring of the school's is. Procedures for safeguarding the well-being of children and staff are rigorous and at the time of the inspection thoroughly followed. The school knows its local community well. Links with parents and partnerships with other schools and professionals are good. Although the Nursery has a very positive impact locally, contributing well to community cohesion, records pertaining to this provision are at a relatively early stage. However, examples of the Nursery's positive impact locally include the provision of parent groups and workshops, which enable parents from diverse backgrounds to socialise and learn together. The Nursery has provided good opportunities for some vulnerable secondary school students to be involved in work experience, enhancing the self-esteem and confidence of these young people.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	2
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	3
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	2

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents are happy with nearly all the aspects of the Nursery. All of them agreed that their children are safe and helped to stay healthy, that teaching is good, that their children's individual needs are met well, and that they are helped to support their children at home. They are all happy with their children's overall experience of Nursery. The most positive response of all was that their children enjoy their time at Nursery. This is borne out by inspection findings. Although the majority of parents feel positive about the way the school keeps them informed, a small minority expressed concerns about this. Discussion with the headteacher revealed that staff meet formally with parents at the beginning and end of each school year and are available informally at other times. However, pressures and challenges on the Nursery have reduced the frequency of planned consultations over the past few years. Leaders and managers are concerned and committed to improve this in future.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Margaret McMillan 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 95 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	81	8	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	79	9	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	42	19	44	4	9	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	61	15	35	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	74	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	63	14	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	61	16	37	0	0	0	0
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)	21	49	19	44	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	67	13	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	61	15	35	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	58	12	29	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	56	14	33	0	0	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	79	9	21	0	0	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



16 October 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Margaret McMillan Nursery School, Islington, N19 3SF

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming to us when we visited your school recently. It was lovely to see you all at work and play. I enjoyed having lunch with some of you. The things you told us about your school really helped us with our work.

We agree with you that your Nursery is a lovely place to be and can see why you are so happy and well behaved there. All the grown-ups help you a lot and care for you all very well. You have lots of interesting things to do and lots of things to play with inside and out. It was good to see photographs of some of you outside in raincoats and wellingtons enjoying the wind and the rain. It will be good when your new computers arrive. You are all making good progress in your learning and development. Nursery leaders have worked well to keep everything interesting, happy and safe during a long time of extension and repair work to the buildings. You have learned a lot about diggers, building and materials during this time.

To make the Nursery even better, we have asked the grown-ups to:

- make sure that everyone knows and understands how activities are planned and resources organised at your Nursery so that they can all work as well as they can for you.

With best wishes to you and your families,

Yours faithfully

Jo Curd

Lead Inspector

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