

Low Hall Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103027
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	323727
Inspection date	30 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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 (total)	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Bonsor
Headteacher	Ms Claire Toberman
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2006
School address	Low Hall Lane London E17 8BE
Telephone number	020 8520 1689
Fax number	020 8520 1689

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and particularly investigated:

- attendance
- how school leaders monitor and evaluate all that the school provides
- how well children with additional learning needs are supported, including those at an early stage of learning English.

The inspectors talked with children and met with some staff and governors. Parts of lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires were examined and school information, including its self-evaluation, was scrutinised. The inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

In this small school, most children attend either in the morning or afternoon. The great majority of children come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest group are of Pakistani heritage. Two thirds of the children are at an early stage of learning English when they start school. An above average proportion of the children have learning difficulties, mainly for delayed speech and language. The school incorporates a Children's Centre and offers an extended school day.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. This is not just the view of inspectors. It is heartily endorsed by the very appreciative parents, who describe the 'happy, welcoming and safe environment' and the way in which the Nursery works in such close partnership with them. As one parent wrote, 'I really couldn't ask for a more caring, stimulating and happy place for my daughter to learn about the world around her!' Staff know the children very well. They meet at the start of each day so that each child's 'link worker' can share observations on how well the children in their charge are doing and whether there are any concerns that need to be followed up. Together with the secure arrangements for ensuring child protection and children's safety, these welfare procedures are outstanding. Although children choose activities for themselves, the high level of adult support means that help and guidance are always at hand. As a result, children's achievement is exceptional. From a starting point which, for many, is below that normally expected for their ages, children make very rapid progress. When they leave Nursery, they are assessed by the school as having reached standards that are exceptionally high, with many assessed as already having attained the levels expected for the end of the Reception Year. Although these assessments have not been confirmed by external moderation, the standards observed by inspectors, only part-way through the year, are already well above average.

Children with delayed speech and language development are helped to make the same excellent progress as their peers because they are given help that is carefully tailored to their individual learning needs. The same is true for the many children who join Low Hall with very little English. Between them, staff are fluent in a number of minority ethnic languages and use these language skills well to help children to associate words and pictures in their home language as well as in English. It is a mark of the school's remarkable success in introducing children to English that, two terms into the year, it is hard for a visitor to identify which children started school at an early stage of learning the language.

Children are helped to learn and develop exceptionally well. Facilities are excellent, both indoors and out, with children moving freely between the different learning areas. On arrival, they take responsibility for registering themselves by popping a card with their name on it into a pocket bearing the correct initial letter. They then quickly settle to tasks of their choosing. Some read with an adult and some practise their emerging writing skills in the 'graphics area'. In the 'maths and science area', children take a keen interest in growing things. They measure the beanstalks that they have planted to see when they will be ready to transplant out in the school vegetable garden so that they can harvest a crop. They watch the tadpoles from the school pond, in eager anticipation of their metamorphosis into frogs. Others work with adults to join lights, batteries and buzzers to make switched electric circuits. Children in the 'creative area' show off the modelling dough they have made with an adult following an internet recipe and using a microwave. Others work together in the safely modified kitchen to bake hot cross buns. The spicy aroma has to compete with the multisensory collages that children make, using fragrant smelling leaves collected from mint, lavender, sage and eucalyptus plants outside. In the 'imagination area', children cooperate together in role play as doctors, nurses and patients. Others dress up as superheroes and princesses. An array of large and small, plastic and wooden construction toys also provides ample fuel for the children's lively imaginings. Many of these indoor activities are mirrored in the exceptionally well-equipped rubber-surfaced 'outdoor area'. In addition, children can climb, ride large-wheeled toys, and enjoy sand and water play. Every inch of space has been turned to advantage as a hive of activity where children, and not

just their electric circuits, buzz with excitement. As a result, children not only make excellent academic progress but they also come on in leaps and bounds in their personal development. Their behaviour is very good and they readily make healthy eating choices from the fresh fruit and vegetables set out for them. Several parents commented on how their children had made lots of friends at Low Hall and had grown in confidence. Children from diverse backgrounds get on very well together, so that the Nursery functions as a harmonious multi-racial community. Together with the excellent progress that the children make, this prepares them exceedingly well for when they move on to their next schools.

Much is done at the busy Children's Centre too to promote community cohesion and to keep track of its impact. The Centre provides as lively a programme of activities for families as the Nursery provides for its children. From baby yoga to women's support, there are sessions for parents and their young children that meet a huge variety of community needs. Health and welfare needs are very strongly catered for, including through clinics, post-natal support, and dietician and midwifery 'drop-ins', where members of the local community can call in to speak to an expert. Back in the Nursery building, a lot of thought has gone into the layout of the entrance. It is secure, but it gives parents valuable information about their children's welfare and about how best to support their children's learning. It even affords parents an open opportunity to look at folders and photographic records of their children's work.

Low Hall's very considerable success is due to its outstanding leadership and management. Rigorous monitoring by the headteacher, firmly focused on the children's learning, has ensured a consistently high standard of provision and given the headteacher and governors a very accurate picture of the school. The staff work exceptionally well together as a team, so much so that difficulties that the school has had in recruiting a permanent teacher have not been allowed to adversely affect the quality of provision for the children. The maintenance of high standards in the years since the last inspection and the high quality of school self-evaluation demonstrate Low Hall's excellent capacity for continued improvement.

'When I pick my son up, he always looks like he is having a good time.' This comment from a parent typified the views of many who told inspectors how much their children like coming to school. However, despite children's obviously great enjoyment of school, their attendance is no better than satisfactory. In part, this is because young children are especially prone to infections when they first mix in a wider social circle, but it is also the case that a number of parents take their children out of school for holidays and extended family visits abroad. Although the school works hard to stress the importance of regular attendance, including much emphasis in recent newsletters, still more could be done to discourage avoidable absence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Discourage parents from taking their children on holiday in term time to ensure that children do not miss school unnecessarily.

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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 is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
The standards[1] reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 April 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Low Hall Nursery, London, E17 8BE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Low Hall is an excellent Nursery. It is extremely well run. All the staff look after you exceptionally well and give you super help so that you learn and make outstanding progress to attain high standards. Those of you new to learning English make amazing progress in your language skills. The same is true for those of you who are not as chatty when you start in the Nursery. All the interesting and exciting things you get to do are making you confident so that you are very well prepared for your next schools. The spicy smell of the freshly baked hot cross buns made my mouth water, but I was disappointed that nobody saved me one. They must have been so delicious that you scoffed the lot!

We were really impressed with how very well behaved you all are and how very well you all get on with each other. It is what helps to make Low Hall such a happy and friendly place to be. We were sorry to see that some of you miss quite a lot of school. Of course, you need to stay at home when you are unwell, but too much valuable learning time is missed when your mums and dads keep you home for avoidable reasons or take you on holiday or trips during term time. The school has worked hard to tell your parents how important it is for you all to attend regularly but we have asked them to try to do more to discourage avoidable absence. You can help too by reminding your parents that you don't want to miss out on all the fun things happening at Low Hall.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector