

St Stephen's Nursery School

St Stephen's Road, East Ham, London, E6 1AS

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The nursery's exceptional provision ensures children make an excellent start to their education.
- Children make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. Activities are stimulating and meet their needs extremely well.
- The nursery ensures children develop communication and language skills exceptionally well. This is through small-group work, specific programmes, and the huge focus on speaking and listening in all of the activities throughout the nursery.
- Teaching is outstanding because there are a very wide range of engaging activities, with high levels of staff involvement. This ensures that children learn exceptionally well.
- The exemplary outdoor provision is used extremely well to ensure children learn through play and exploration. This is fully supported by staff who intervene sensitively, but highly effectively.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs receive excellent support that meets their needs exceptionally well so that they make outstanding progress.
- Excellent relationships are a hallmark of the nursery's provision. Staff are extremely sensitive to children's differing needs and support them exceptionally well.
- Thorough termly checks on children's progress, and clear and specific help for those not doing well enough, ensure every child is included and supported.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Staff care deeply for the children who blossom in the warm, caring relationships that enable them to become confident, inquiring learners.
- Children are highly active in their learning. They thoroughly enjoy all that is on offer and are kind, thoughtful and caring towards each other.
- Outstanding partnerships with parents and carers ensure they are very well informed and fully engaged in supporting their children's successful learning.
- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership and is very ably supported by senior staff in the nursery. All staff share a passion for excellence, as can be seen in all they do to promote children's outstanding learning. Leaders, managers and governors have been successful in improving teaching and children's achievement.
- Governors provide strong support and clear direction for the work of the nursery. They have played an important role in ensuring its excellent provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons or part lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher of the federation and the deputy headteacher of the nursery.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, four other governors, the leadership team and other staff. A telephone conversation was held with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on children's current progress, planning and checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View survey. However, inspectors spoke to several parents and carers when they brought their children to school and took account of the school's most recent questionnaire to parents and the 26 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Janet Sinclair, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Hicks

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Stephen's Nursery is an above-average-sized nursery school.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of children supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups is high, a large proportion of whom are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Most of the children are of Asian heritage.
- Children start in the nursery the term after their third birthday and most leave the term before their fifth birthday. Although most children transfer to St Stephen's Primary School, some move on to a number of other primary schools.
- The nursery offers two sessions per day, five days a week.
- The nursery shares the site with St Stephen's Primary School, a children's centre with day care provision and a midwifery group practice.
- In 2010, St Stephen's Primary School and the nursery became a federated school led by one headteacher and one governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attendance of children who do not attend school regularly by ensuring parents and carers are fully aware of the importance of regular attendance in supporting their child's achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children start in the nursery with skills and abilities well below those expected for their age. They make excellent progress across the areas of learning so that most reach or exceed the expected levels for their age.
- The school makes careful termly checks on children's progress so that any not doing well enough are quickly identified, and support is put in place to help them catch up. This promotes equality of opportunity and tackles any possible discrimination, although the poor attendance of a few hampers their progress.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs do extremely well due to the outstanding provision. This ensures early identification and support that is extremely well tailored to their individual needs.
- Excellent support for children at an early stage of learning English ensures the swift development of their language skills and that they achieve very well. Early language assessments, the staff's use of children's home language, where possible, and small-group work to develop vocabulary in English fully support this. Additionally, staff work tirelessly to promote confident speaking skills through ongoing discussion with the children throughout the nursery.
- More-able children are challenged through activities that are well suited to their needs and adult questioning that extends their ideas. This ensures that they make excellent progress.
- Wide access to a range of reading books, regular story-reading sessions, and work on letters and the sounds they make promote reading development extremely well. A lovely feature is the shared reading that takes place between older pupils in the primary school and children in the nursery.
- Children enjoy mark-making and use it in most of their activities. For example, when writing recipes, making reports as police officers or taking orders for food in the cafe. The many opportunities provided help children to develop their early writing skills effectively through purposeful, well-planned activities.
- Children thoroughly enjoy activities involving counting such as fishing for ducks, singing number rhymes or making a tally of the number of circuits they run. This ensures rapid progress in developing accuracy in counting.
- Children's physical skills develop successfully as they improve their coordination through climbing on apparatus and being physically active throughout the day. They learn to manipulate materials through, for example, using scissors and knives to cut the beans to expose their pods. They also enjoy healthy snacks throughout the day.
- They develop their understanding of the world through, for example, using magnets, observing tortoises and growing their own vegetables.
- Musical activities, exploration of different materials, use of paint, role play and model making develop children's creative skills very successfully.
- Children have excellent attitudes to their work and display high levels of concentration and huge enthusiasm for all that they do, and this ensures that they learn extremely well.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Outstanding teaching over time has ensured the nursery continues to provide high-quality education for the children in its care. This nurtures and develops their exceptional attitudes to learning.
- All staff have an excellent understanding of how children of this age learn, and plan exciting, challenging activities that meet the varying needs of the children exceptionally well.
- Excellent activities, well staffed by adults who interact very well with the children, ensure high levels of involvement, concentration and learning that promote rapid progress.

- The extensive outdoor area, extremely well organised and resourced, and very creatively used by staff, provides a unique learning environment. It ensures exciting opportunities that secure children's rapid development in all areas of learning.
- Staff challenge more-able children effectively through well-planned activities that stretch them and extend their knowledge and skills.
- All nursery staff ensure an environment that is rich in language and question children in a way that stimulates discussion. As a result, children thoroughly enjoy opportunities to talk to each other and all staff, like singing rhymes and happily discuss whatever they are doing.
- Children listen to and practise saying different sounds through, for example, using alliteration (the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words) when writing their recipes or when engaged in forming letters and discussing the sounds they make. This and similar activities prepares them well for later more formal learning of letters and the sounds they make (phonics).
- Teaching is strongly aimed at ensuring children develop their spoken English rapidly. For example, through ongoing high-quality dialogue in the café, small-group work to develop vocabulary and effective use of specialist programmes to develop speaking skills.
- Regular small-group work in familiar settings for children at an early stage of learning English helps them to quickly learn the vocabulary for frequently used words in English.
- Staff make excellent use of activities such as getting children to measure each other and encouraging them to compare their heights, to develop their understanding of measuring. This and a huge number of opportunities for counting help children to successfully develop their mathematical skills.
- Staff regularly assess children's learning through making notes and taking photographs which they carefully record in the children's learning journals. They use these assessments to inform termly progress meetings to ensure any children not doing well enough get extra help and more-able children are being sufficiently challenged.
- The teaching of disabled children and those with special educational needs is highly skilled and positive. For example, when singing action songs in the multisensory room, excellent support and encouragement from staff ensured children remained engaged for a sustained period of time, thus developing new skills extremely well.
- Staff have created a very positive learning environment that is extremely well suited to the children. This, coupled with excellent relationships and good staffing ratios, ensures children do exceptionally well in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is outstanding. Children behave extremely well in all situations and this has a strong impact on their highly successful learning.
- The school fosters excellent relationships. Adults manage the children very well and any minor lapses in behaviour are dealt with very quickly. Children are also keen to moderate each other's behaviour, as they are very clear about the school's expectations.
- Children work and play alongside each other extremely well, take turns and share resources willingly, and are keen to follow routines. This is because of the excellent role models that staff provide and the very positive, supportive learning environment that has been created.
- Excellent induction arrangements, including home visits, help children to settle quickly. Additionally, many of the children attend the on-site children's centre or day care provision prior to starting in the nursery so are already very familiar with their surroundings.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding.
- High-quality policies and procedures are in place to ensure children's safety and there are no recorded incidents of bullying or racist behaviour.
- Attendance is good for most children and the school works hard to promote this. However, a few children who are persistently absent do not fully benefit from the nursery's excellent provision.

- All of the parents and carers spoken to during the inspection strongly agree that there are no issues with behaviour or bullying and their children are very safe in school. School staff are fully in agreement. Inspection evidence confirms these views are accurate.
- The school promotes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Children work very well together, quickly learn right from wrong, for example, when discussing the work of the police. They are extremely kind, caring and respectful towards each other.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership, both for the nursery and across the federation. She ensures a high-quality learning environment through a strong drive for excellence in all of the nursery's work.
- Senior and middle leaders with responsibility for the nursery are fully committed to maintaining the school's outstanding provision through hard work and continuing professional development. They have ensured a strong staff team who work extremely well together to maintain high standards and exceptional provision. This demonstrates capacity for further improvement.
- The school has an accurate view of its performance. The school development plan, shared with staff and governors, is clearly set out to ensure key areas for development are tackled effectively so that the school continues to improve and develop.
- Leaders have a clear view of teaching quality and regularly check to ensure its high quality is maintained. This is done through formal lesson observations, short visits to lessons and work sampling. They ensure staff get support and training to enable them to maintain outstanding teaching.
- All staff have their performance regularly assessed and targets are set to ensure high standards are maintained. Staff appreciate the support they get and also the opportunities to develop and improve their practice. For example, refining the outdoor learning and sharing good practice across the nursery.
- Extensive liaison and a whole federation approach ensure a high level of support for children and their families, and a smooth transition between each phase on the school site.
- The curriculum is rich and meets the needs of the children extremely well. It covers all the areas of learning successfully through creative and exceptionally stimulating activities that provide a high level of challenge and relevance for the children.
- The school has excellent links with parents and carers who as a result have total confidence in the school and feel very well involved in every aspect of their children's learning. For example, parents and carers spoken to said, 'the provision is wonderful', and 'the school is excellent and we are very proud of it'. They are well informed about the school's work through regular newsletters, curriculum days and opportunities to talk to staff at the beginning and end of each session.
- The school is part of a local teaching alliance involving direct training of students in school. Senior staff in the nursery are specialist leaders of Early Years education and provide support to other nursery schools in the area. This shows the school's success in sharing its strengths with other professionals.
- The school receives light-touch support from the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**

The well-established governing body has an excellent knowledge of the school, and supports and challenges it in equal measure to ensure high standards are maintained. Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching and children's achievement. This is through the headteacher's reports and visits to school by the designated nursery governor to check on behalf of the full governing body. They ensure that children and staff are kept safe through effective safeguarding procedures and regular safety checks. They have an in-depth knowledge of the school's finances, and know how well children are doing due to the effective checks on their progress. Governors undertake appropriate training to ensure they keep up to date with any new

initiatives. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met in order to ensure staff and children are kept safe. They are involved in setting targets for the management of the headteacher's performance and know that there is a similar process in place for staff.

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	102704
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	430832

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ciaran Dempsey
Headteacher	Neena Lall
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 June 2011
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