

Dollis Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101275
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	354972
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Marshall

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	329
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Living
Headteacher	Christine Rayner
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, observed 10 teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff, school leaders and representatives of the governing body. They looked at school documentation including policies, pupils' progress data, attendance figures and the school's development planning. They also scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated 182 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the school's strategies for improving the learning and progress for all pupils in writing.
- The use staff make of assessment information to support and challenge pupils' learning, particularly the most able in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The effectiveness of leaders in checking, reviewing and taking actions to sustain improvements in teaching and pupils' progress.
- The extent to which the school has been successful in taking actions to tackle pupil absenteeism.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average infant school. The pupils come from both White British families and a wide range of other minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost two thirds of the children speak English as an additional language and of these, the majority join with little or no English, with 39 different first languages recorded. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average and represents a range of needs. A greater-than-average proportion of pupils join and leave the school at times other than expected, with the majority having had no previous formal education. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has gained the Healthy School accreditation and the Artsmark award. Over the last two years there have been many changes to staff, including the appointments of several senior leaders.

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. Since its previous inspection, it has successfully raised standards while maintaining the good level of pastoral care, guidance and support it provides, ensuring that pupils feel safe and well cared for and thrive in their personal development. Pupils benefit from good relationships with staff and their behaviour is good both in lessons and at play; they show considerable support for one another regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. They talk with enthusiasm about their school and have a good understanding of how to stay safe and lead a healthy lifestyle, as demonstrated in their keen take-up of extra-curricular clubs.

The school has effectively focused on improving teaching and learning for the pupils throughout a period of staff changes and recent appointments. Senior leaders and the governing body have a clear awareness of the school's effectiveness and what it needs to do to bring about improvement. For example, there is a strong shared commitment to raising attainment for all pupils and achievement has risen steadily as the school has focused effectively on systematically developing pupils' basic skills, including in writing. This success, combined with the rise in attendance for the oldest pupils, shows the school's good capacity for sustained improvement. The school is now focusing on improving attendance for the younger pupils through its close work with families, especially where a few pupils are too often absent or late for school.

Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and enables them to progress well in lessons that are lively and interesting. In this caring school, all staff know pupils' abilities well because teachers regularly check on how well pupils are doing and are effective in sharing this information with them and their parents and carers. Although there is a small degree of variability between different classes, all groups of pupils make at least good and sometimes better progress from their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage to when they leave to join the junior school. This is because of the considerable skill with which the school adapts and targets the well-focused support it gives pupils of different abilities. Across the school, day-to-day teachers' marking is good. However, some inconsistencies in the use of assessment remain and opportunities are sometimes missed to set suitably challenging work for all pupils. In the Reception classes, activities do not always take enough account of the next steps in the learning of the most-able children.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - making better use of assessment information to ensure that lessons always challenge and engage pupils well

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- ensuring all activities on offer in the Reception classes are closely matched to next steps in children's learning, particularly the most able.
- Improve attendance by:
 - ensuring that persistent absence is reduced by working directly with the families of the very small number of pupils who are too often absent
 - promoting the importance of good attendance to all pupils and parents and maintaining this as a high priority across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well academically. They are clear about their learning, talk with confidence and share their ideas willingly with one another. During a literacy session, as the teacher modelled a story opening, pupils in Year 1 were keen to talk to their partners about ideas. Using skills from good prior learning and a sound knowledge of their own targets, they confidently discussed alternatives and contributed their own suggestions about how these could be improved. Pupils of all ages talk eagerly about what they have been learning and know they have individual targets. They are keen to know how to improve when their work is marked, engaging them effectively in the next steps in their learning. The trend in attainment in the Year 2 national tests over the last three years is broadly average, though steadily rising. As part of a whole-school focus on improving the quality of assessment, the school has ensured that different groups are targeted very effectively to enable them to make equally good gains. Consequently, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those at the early stages of learning English as well as those newly arrived at the school, make the same good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Across the school, pupils achieve well in their personal and social development. Behaviour is well managed, with most pupils saying that they enjoy school, feel cared for and know they can talk to someone if they have any problems. Pupils' enjoyment of school life is evident in their eagerness to take on responsibilities and their very supportive approach to one another, which helps make the school a very safe and welcoming place. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and, with many different ethnic heritages represented in the school population, their cultural awareness within the school is particularly strong. Pupils' ability to work well together from an early age and their good communication skills are key factors in pupils' good development of basic skills and preparation for their future life and learning.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Pupils' keenness to learn is due in a large part to the increasingly creative curriculum and the good, and sometimes better, quality of teaching across the school. Engaging visits, such as those made as part of the Mega Structures topic, help to bring the curriculum alive. These creative links between subjects help to stimulate and foster pupils' interest and provide opportunities to engage pupils, such as those at the early stages of learning English and boys, in particular, in their learning. Clubs effectively promote pupils' positive relationships and encourage healthy lifestyles. All staff play their part in delivering this stimulating and engaging curriculum. Pupils' welfare and personal, social and health needs are catered for well because the school works closely with parents and carers as well as outside agencies where needed.

The key features of the effective teaching are the good relationships adults have with pupils and the interest and fun generated in lessons, which help pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. In a Year 2 history lesson, the teacher used images of different castles on the interactive whiteboard effectively to engage and stimulate learning. These provided very effective starting points for pupils' discussion and generated a wealth of vocabulary which they used well in their subsequent writing. Similarly, in a Year 2 technology lesson, pupils enthusiastically tackled the problem of constructing their own castle using different materials. They had clear success criteria that they regularly checked their models against. Pupils were given every chance to talk about their learning,

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confidently sharing their ideas and thoughts, and consequently were highly motivated and worked well collaboratively. Where teaching is less strong, though still good, opportunities are sometimes missed to use questioning to extend and stretch pupils' understanding, particularly the more able.

During lessons, adults regularly discuss with pupils just how they can improve their work. Consistently evaluative marking in literacy and numeracy helps pupils understand the next small steps needed to improve their learning and achieve their targets and, as a result, progress is accelerated. The particularly well-targeted use of well-trained additional adults in leading small groups ensures the oldest pupils, and increasingly those in other classes, are supported very well in their learning. Since the previous inspection, the school has been successful in improving provision and outcomes in the basic skills of numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is shared by all members of the senior leadership team and governing body, who are equally ambitious for the school. There is a positive team spirit and a strong atmosphere of 'can do' among the whole staff. Good links with parents are helping the school to achieve its goals. As new leaders take up their role they quickly become involved in analysing performance data to see how well the school is doing and to plan actions for improvement. Through its rigorous tracking systems, the school is effective in holding teachers to account for their pupils' progress. Subject leaders play an effective part in checking how well their subject is doing and planning for improvement, with the result that pupils' progress is rising steadily. The governing body is conscientious in fulfilling its statutory duties to ensure the safety of the children and agree policies. They too play an important role as critical friend to the headteacher and are increasingly effective in checking how well the school is doing.

All staff play their part in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are good, with the newly appointed safeguarding governor making appropriate checks on the school's procedures and systems. The school's promotion of equality and diversity is good because it takes effective steps to tackle discrimination to make sure that pupils from all backgrounds perform to a similar standard, while ensuring the most vulnerable pupils have the opportunities to achieve as well as their peers. Pupils are encouraged to play their part in the school and the local community, and their understanding and contribution are developing well in these areas. The school is making good progress in promoting pupils' understanding of communities and cultures in national and global contexts.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes grow quickly in confidence, becoming enthusiastic learners because of the strong focus on their pastoral care and developing their communication skills. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, the environment is word-rich and labels, some written by the children themselves, hang from equipment and trees encouraging their communication, language and literacy skills. While these activities benefit all, they are particularly successful with those at the early stages of learning English. Children are provided with many opportunities to mark, make, write and read. For example in the Nursery, children were expected to sign for their bikes before they could use them while others used the highly colourful fence panels to paint letters and words. Due to effective teaching, particularly in the Nursery class, children make good progress in all areas of learning. They start in Year 1 with broadly average attainment with a few children reaching the higher levels. The curriculum is adapted effectively, using the children's own interests to engage them in learning.

Teaching is good and the children learn well from the high-quality interventions they receive from teachers and other adults as they play. In general, learning opportunities are well planned so that children build on their knowledge and understanding both indoors and outdoors. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to plan activities that specifically extend the most able and accelerate their progress. Communication with parents and carers is good, with regular opportunities for them to discuss their children's learning and how they can help their children's development through everyday activities. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and team use assessment information effectively to promote learning and are able to demonstrate the good gains that children make in all areas of learning.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The return of questionnaires from parents and carers was above average for this type of school. The vast majority of responses were positive and most of the written comments expressed considerable satisfaction with the school. They commended the caring attitude of the school, its support for pupils and the quality of teaching. Typical comments about the school included: 'The school attitude is caring and enthusiastic', 'My child loves going to school' and 'The headteacher and staff are really nice and support my child's needs.'

A very small minority reported concerns over how the school informs parents and carers about their child's progress. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed that regular meetings are held to discuss pupils' progress and the open-door policy which encourages more informal opportunities to talk to staff is welcomed by parents and carers, some of whom commented positively on this aspect of the school's work in their questionnaires.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dollis Infant 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 182 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 318 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	116	64	64	35	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	98	54	79	43	2	1	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	83	46	90	49	9	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	76	42	99	54	5	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	83	46	93	51	3	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	68	37	105	58	5	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	63	35	113	62	4	2	1	1
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)	56	31	106	58	4	2	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	32	110	60	5	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	38	97	53	6	3	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	36	106	58	6	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	77	42	91	50	6	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	88	48	83	46	3	2	2	1

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 all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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 pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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 pupils 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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.



26 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dollis Infant School, London NW7 2BU

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited your school. We were pleased to hear that you like school and we agree that your teachers plan many interesting things for you to do. You get on with one another well and behave well in lessons and around the school. We think your school gives you the right help so that you know how to keep healthy and safe.

The inspection team has found that your school is good. The curriculum planned for you meets your needs well and teachers help you make good progress in your work. The leaders in the school know what needs to be done to make your school better. In order to help you to make faster progress, we have asked the grown-ups in your school to do two things:

- Make sure your lessons are always challenging enough and interesting and that those activities planned in the Nursery and Reception classes help all children with the next steps in their learning.
- Work with you and your families to make sure you miss as little of your learning as possible by coming to school every day

You can help by continuing to be kind and considerate to one another. Thank you again for helping us with our work.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Marshall

Lead inspector

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