

Alexander McLeod Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131841
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	360330
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Jon Carter

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	517
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Daniel Price
Headteacher	Laurence Cawthorne
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 23 lessons taught by 20 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with school leaders and managers, representatives from the governing body and three groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, the school's analysis of pupils' progress, curriculum plans, minutes of governing body meetings, records of the school leaders' lesson monitoring and many other documents. They analysed the responses from the 246 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from 109 pupils and 34 staff. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

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- How effectively teaching and assessment are being used to develop pupils' writing skills across the curriculum and throughout the school. ♦
- How well leaders and managers use information about the quality of pupils' learning to bring about improvements to the quality of teaching and the curriculum.
- The extent to which the Early Years Foundation Stage provision effectively promotes good communication, language and literacy development, including writing skills, particularly for children who are known to be eligible for free school meals.

Information about the school

Alexander McLeod is a larger than average primary school. The largest groups in the school are from White British or Black African backgrounds. Overall, the school has a much higher than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and many of these speak English as an additional language, although few pupils are at a very early stage of development in their English speaking skills. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The school has a much higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the larger groups of whom have moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs or experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of three Reception classes. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

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

Alexander McLeod is a good school, where pupils are well prepared for their future lives. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, with many placing particular value on the support given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the approachability of teachers. One parent, echoing the views of others, wrote, 'Staff are always around and available to any child or parent in need.' The good care that staff readily give to pupils ensures that they always feel very safe at school and this contributes to their enjoyment of school and above average attendance.

Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Their learning and development is often stronger in mathematics and science than it is in English. This is because the progress pupils make in writing is less rapid when compared to how well they move forward with other basic skills. Through their accurate and reflective self-evaluation, school leaders have identified this as one of the main areas the school needs to develop. Where action has been taken to address the issue in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6, better progress is beginning to be made. However, there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to use and practise their extended writing skills other than in English lessons, particularly in Years 1 to 4.

Teaching, which is usually good, supports good learning in most lessons. This is because teachers' plans take careful account of what pupils know and can do as well as what they have greater difficulty with. However, while most work is marked regularly, the quality and use of this written feedback is inconsistent. Not all staff clearly identify the next steps pupils need to make to develop their knowledge or skills. Consequently, pupils can occasionally be left unsure as to the best ways to improve their work. Even when marking is better, with clear suggestions for improvement, pupils are not always given enough time to respond to the comments.

Leaders have been successful in improving the quality of education since the previous inspection, when the school was judged to be satisfactory. Underpinning the improved teaching, learning and achievement lies more effective arrangements for tracking pupils' progress. As a result, the development plan has been focused well on the correct improvement priorities. The established and cohesive workforce share a common purpose and staff at all levels fully understand their role in improving the quality of learning. Actions taken to tackle underachievement, for example in mathematics, have been successful and consequently levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved and continue to rise. School leaders, supported by a strongly developing governing body, are, therefore, demonstrating a good capacity to secure improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing, through developing high quality learning opportunities for all pupils to use and practise writing skills across a broader range of subjects.
- Improve the impact of marking and feedback on pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring the marking of pupils' work incorporates examples and models so that pupils understand exactly how their work can be improved
 - improving the rigour and consistency with which teachers' written feedback is reflected upon by pupils and used to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils usually make good progress in lessons, such as that achieved by Year 3 pupils in a good mathematics lesson when solving addition problems, and they enjoy the activities that teachers plan for them. In this good lesson, pupils used a technique known as 'partitioning' which helped them to understand how to add up hundreds, tens and units quickly and accurately. More pupils are now reaching the expected levels of attainment in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2, compared to previous years. While progress in reading is good, pupils make only satisfactory progress in writing. This is because opportunities are missed for pupils to revisit and extend their writing. However, this is beginning to improve, as seen when teachers used children's fiction to inspire writing.

Both boys and girls make progress at similar rates because they are engaged by well chosen learning activities. Pupils from Black African backgrounds and those of White British heritage make slightly better progress than those from other ethnic groups. In most lessons, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress because tasks are set which match those abilities well and they are well supported by teaching assistants. This is also the case for pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. In some cases, these pupils have received additional support following effective monitoring of their progress.

Pupils demonstrate their good adoption of healthy lifestyles through their enthusiastic participation in both physical education lessons and a range of active sports provided at lunchtime and after school. The school is recognised for this, as well as pupils' positive attitudes to healthy eating, through the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. Pupils have strong levels of social and moral development. They work collaboratively and play harmoniously with their peers from a wide diversity of ethnic backgrounds.

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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	2
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	2
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 benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum which is often well linked across a range of subjects. In personal, social and health education, for example, pupils from Years 3 and 4 were able to apply their mathematical knowledge by analysing the results of a questionnaire about bullying. While opportunities for using and practising English skills are better structured in Years 5 and 6 through links to particular books and texts, this is less well established in other classes. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities experience a well-adapted curriculum which helps them overcome their difficulties very effectively. This is particularly successful where additional small-group teaching makes close links with pupils' current learning in their usual class. The school provides a welcoming environment which celebrates pupils' achievements with bright, colourful displays and suitable prominence given to written work.

Learning mentors and specialists, such as the counsellor from the multi-agency 'BEST' team, provide additional effective support to parents and carers as well as pupils to help address emotional difficulties and secure improved attendance. Pupils benefit from good extended personal and social education sessions in their preparation for moving on to secondary education. A large majority of the school population attend at least one of the good range of clubs offered by the school. These enrich pupils' school experience with an appropriate balance of cultural and sporting opportunities. Increasing use of the school's virtual learning environment, an internet facility where pupils can access work and

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communicate with their teachers, is engaging more pupils with out-of-school learning and providing parents and carers with information about what their children are studying.

In most lessons, teachers ensure that pupils have appropriate access to progressively harder work. Pupils are motivated to complete these more challenging tasks because staff communicate a positive ethos of success with great effectiveness. As one pupil unequivocally stated, 'They make you feel good about yourself.' Teachers' regular reviews of what pupils have achieved in lessons inform teaching well. Lesson plans ensure that misconceptions that have arisen are dealt with swiftly so that learning can progress at a good pace. This was shown, for example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson where the teacher had devised four tips to help pupils to overcome difficulties when identifying which calculation methods to use when solving different written problems. Feedback to pupils through written comments lacks clear models that illustrate, for example, how to edit and improve their writing. Occasionally, where pupils are engaged in independent writing, teachers do not check progress sufficiently frequently and this allows the pace of learning to slow.

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?

As a result of more focused checking of teaching, the established senior leadership team have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teamwork is well developed. For example, teachers who teach the same year groups focus well on analysing pupils' progress. They communicate well to ensure that common issues, such as progress in writing, are tackled with increasing effectiveness throughout the school. The shared approach to school self-evaluation and development planning ensures that all staff are fully subscribed to the leadership team's vision of continuous improvement. This is communicated enthusiastically by leaders at all levels, including those who are not part of the senior leadership team.

The governing body maintains a satisfactory overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have sufficient expertise and tenacity to ensure that school leaders are increasingly well supported and challenged. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory, with suitable systems and constructive links with outside agencies to aid this. Pupils, whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, are tracked effectively and the provision made for them ensures that they make at least as good progress as other pupils. There are few racist incidents. Consequently, the effectiveness with which the school promotes equality and seeks to eliminate discrimination is good.

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The school has a good understanding of the social, ethnic and religious diversity of the area which it serves. The school recognises that, while links with the local area are well established, opportunities for pupils to interact with others from different parts of the United Kingdom and beyond are more limited, although some plans are in place to address this issue. Consequently, the school's contribution to the promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. A range of effective partnerships provide good opportunities for pupils, parents and staff, such as those with the outreach centre for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The school provides parents and carers with a good range of information and signposts other resources appropriately.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in the Reception classes with levels of development which are below age-related expectations. The setting adopts an effective, flexible approach to learning which responds well to children's interests. Teaching makes good use of assessment information to identify where they could make better progress. As a result, through enjoyable and engaging activities, children make good progress in almost all areas of their learning but particularly in their communication, language and literacy skills. Since the previous inspection, school leaders responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage have introduced an effective daily phonics programme to build children's understanding of the sounds letters make. This has consequently had a positive impact on their writing skills and a greater proportion of children now enter Key Stage 1 having reached a good level of development in this area. Additionally, children known to be eligible for free school meals were part of a group to receive additional support through the 'chatterbox' programme. This was also successful in helping to improve their learning in language and literacy.

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Good use is made of available resources both indoors and outside. Children are particularly enthusiastic to use the recently established forest area, where they develop improved social and communication skills and a better knowledge and understanding of the world. Teachers and teaching assistants interact well with the children and assess their progress very effectively through observation and questioning. This enables them to successfully devise exciting activities that suit children's needs and interests and move their learning on swiftly.

Leaders responsible for the provision ensure that children's welfare and learning needs are met well. Staff in all classes work well together and liaise regularly with their colleagues at feeder nurseries and the main school as well as securing positive and effective relationships with parents and carers. Good use of progress tracking information has identified a slight difference in achievement between boys and girls in creative development and suitable plans have been made to redress the balance.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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

Nearly half of parents and carers returned questionnaires, representing an above average response. Responses to the questions were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Where parents and carers made written comments, these were mainly positive. Parents were particularly pleased about how easy it was to talk to staff and how well their children with special educational needs and/or disabilities were supported. Inspection evidence supports parents' views that these pupils are well cared for in school and make progress at similar rates to their peers. A few parents felt that the school did not take account of their views. Discussions with school leaders showed that they recognised that there are still some parents with whom they do not have sufficient contact and that the school is working to address this issue.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alexander McLeod Primary 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.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	165	67	72	29	6	2	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	149	61	96	39	1	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	120	49	119	48	5	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	128	52	112	46	4	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	147	60	94	38	1	0	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	129	52	110	45	6	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	120	49	114	46	8	3	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)	82	33	140	57	5	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	102	41	132	54	10	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	92	37	133	54	9	4	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	71	29	156	63	14	6	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	107	43	131	53	5	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	145	59	92	37	7	3	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 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.



28 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alexander McLeod Primary School, London SE2 0QS

Thank you for being so welcoming and keen to talk to us when we inspected your school recently. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy going to school.

I am writing to tell you that you go to a good school. Since your school was last inspected, the teachers who are in charge of your school have worked hard to make sure that everyone has made better progress. ♦ Overall, you make good progress, although you often do better in mathematics than English. Your attendance at school is above average and your behaviour is always good ♦ well done! Your teachers often make your lessons interesting and exciting for you and let you know how well you are getting on. You told us that you trust your teachers and feel very safe at school.

Even a good school can continue to improve, so we have asked the headteacher of your school to concentrate on making sure that:

- all pupils at your school have plenty of opportunities to practise and develop their writing
- your teachers give you clear examples of how to improve and enough time to reflect on the comments they make when they mark your work.

You can all help by showing your teachers that you understand their feedback by taking time to respond to what they have written.

Yours sincerely

Jon Carter

Lead inspector

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