

Lark Hall Primary School (Including Lark Hall Centre for Pupils with Autism)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100576
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	343732
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ebenezer Akinsanmi
Headteacher	Elizabeth Tennant
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons and observed 18 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, the school improvement partner and groups of pupils. They also talked to groups of parents and carers who were present at the start and finish of the school day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and examined its improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, data on pupils' progress, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, and a range of school policies. They also analysed questionnaires received from 50 parents and carers and 90 pupils.

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

Pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics and science.

How well teaching takes account of the needs of different groups of pupils and helps all pupils to improve their attainment and progress.

The effectiveness of the curriculum in motivating and inspiring all pupils and providing challenge and interest for them.

How well the school supports those pupils new to speaking English and those with particularly low levels of prior attainment.

The effectiveness of middle leaders and the governing body in monitoring and evaluating achievement and the quality of teaching and learning, and in contributing to school improvement.

Information about the school

This school is larger than most other primary schools. The very large majority of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than is typically found. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement, is above average. Their needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. The school includes a Centre for Pupils with Autism and is part of a federation with a local primary school, the headteacher of which is the executive headteacher of Lark Hall. There is a Sure Start Children's Centre attached to the school which provides Nursery education for children aged 3'4 that is not managed by the governing body. In July 2009 at its previous inspection, the school was given a notice that it required significant improvement.

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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is a good and rapidly improving school which has made great gains in raising pupil attainment, accelerating progress, ensuring there is far more good and better teaching and improving the climate for learning since the previous inspection. One pupil reflected the views of many when saying, 'This is a great school. It's like one big family here.' The vast majority of parents are supportive, and even those who have some criticisms recognise that their children love coming to school.

The driving force behind the school's success is undoubtedly the dedicated headteacher, supported by a very talented team of senior leaders. There is a strong sense of teamwork and pride in what has already been achieved, coupled with a total absence of complacency. School self-evaluation is highly accurate. Most importantly, the school knows exactly what to do further to sustain its journey towards excellence and this, together with the successful actions leaders have taken to ensure strong improvement since the previous inspection, means the capacity to improve further is good.

Pupils join the school with skills and abilities that are low. By the end of Year 6, attainment has risen considerably. Works seen in all year groups, together with the unvalidated test results in 2010, confirm that attainment is broadly average overall, and is highest in English. This is a huge improvement over previous years and represents good progress and achievement. Nearly all pupils meet or exceed their challenging targets. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children at this stage benefit from excellent accommodation, inside and outdoors, that is used mostly to good effect although, occasionally, opportunities are missed to develop children's skills in some areas of learning.

Pupils' personal development is good because they are encouraged to see their potential and are given the self-confidence to work hard and aim high. A very positive atmosphere permeates the school. All adults work together extremely well to ensure that all pupils, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, are able to take full advantage of all that the school has to offer. The school is highly successful in utilising the small site and buildings which have 'seen better days' and which are immaculately maintained. Pupils gain much from the exciting and creative outdoor area which provides rich opportunities for pupils from the Centre for Autism to play and learn together with pupils from the main school. As a result of the strenuous efforts of the school, attendance is average, but improving.

Lessons are typified by enthusiasm, enjoyment, engagement and good behaviour. Teachers mark books and set targets for improvement carefully and regularly. As a result, the advice teachers give to pupils as to how to improve their work is very effective and

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most pupils are clear as to the next steps in their learning. In a minority of lessons, learning is held back because teachers do not always ensure that pupils are given sufficient time to work independently and to talk about their findings. Sometimes, tasks set in lessons do not provide maximum challenge for all pupils, particularly the more able.

The governing body supports the school well and plays a key role in promoting effective safeguarding and good links with parents. They are increasingly becoming more influential in evaluating the work of the school and playing an active part in setting school priorities. The school's promotion of community cohesion has focused on the school community which is entirely harmonious and totally cohesive. Links with people in the local community and with communities beyond the school are not fully developed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on current good practice to further improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better in all year groups by:
 - making sure that there is a sharper match of work to pupils' different abilities, particularly for more-able pupils
 - giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class.
- Extend the school's work on promoting community cohesion by increasing the opportunities for pupils to become more actively involved in local issues and by developing links with communities in the United Kingdom and globally.
- Enhance provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making greater use of the outside learning area
 - making more effective use of assessment information to plan for the next steps in learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The work seen by inspectors in lessons confirms the overall picture of good and rapidly improving progress. Key to this success is the introduction of rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the progress of each pupil towards challenging targets. Progress in English is at least good, and frequently better, and teachers have rightly focused on developing pupils' writing and comprehension skills. Progress is good in mathematics and science, where good attention has been given to developing pupils' problem-solving and investigation skills. Pupils greatly enjoy school, grow in confidence and develop very positive attitudes to learning, the quality of which in the majority of lessons is now at least good. For instance, in an exceptional Year 2 numeracy lesson, all groups of pupils made rapid progress in developing their measuring skills and really enjoyed the challenge of the task. The school is very conscious of the needs of all pupils. It works very effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those new to learning English and those who enter the school with particularly low levels of attainment. Detailed plans to support these groups, coupled with thoughtful deployment of learning assistants and timely interventions, ensure that they make similar progress to that of their classmates. The progress of pupils in the Centre for Pupils with Autism is also good.

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Pupils have a well-developed understanding of right and wrong, and enjoy the wonders of life around them. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good, although some can be boisterous at play time and at the end of the day. Pupils readily explain the value of adopting healthy lifestyles and the need for exercise and have a good understanding for their age of how to be safe in school and the wider community. Many pupils have periods of absence because, against the very strong advice of the school, many parents take their children away for extended holidays in term time. Pupils develop good social and interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. Their broadly average standards in the key skills in English and mathematics mean that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stages of their lives.

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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
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?

Teaching includes much good and better practice. Highly effective teaching, such as that seen in a Year 6 English lesson where pupils were learning to develop 'tension' in their writing, captivates and enthuses pupils and keeps them on their toes with searching questioning and challenging tasks. Lessons are orderly and many are also highly enjoyable. Tasks and concepts are clearly explained, and adults ask perceptive questions which help pupils to think and use more varied vocabulary in their answers. Effective use of 'talking partners', drama, role play and letter and sounds (phonics) activities help pupils who are new to learning English make good progress in their speaking and writing. Where

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teaching is less effective, learning and progress are held back because some teachers do not plan adequately enough for the range of abilities in the class, with the result that high-attaining pupils are sometimes not challenged enough. In a minority of lessons, teachers talk too much, which limits the time pupils are actively and independently learning. This results in slower progress and less time for pupils to articulate what they have learnt.

The school has set up very thorough systems to check on pupils' progress and these are used very well to ensure that none is in danger of falling behind and to enable teachers to consistently set the next steps for each pupil's learning.

The school has a caring ethos in which all pupils, especially those in the Centre for Pupils with Autism, receive good support. Child protection procedures are rigorous and the care for vulnerable pupils is thorough and effective. Excellent links with specialists help pupils with their learning, social skills and emotional development. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong and helps them to make similar progress to their peers. The carefully structured curriculum contributes strongly to pupils' learning because the interests and capabilities of most pupils are well catered for. Carefully and imaginatively planned themes with strong links between subjects have successfully motivated and enthused pupils and have done much to increase their confidence as learners. However, the school recognises the need to make planning for different abilities consistently sharply focused.

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 highly effective headteacher leads the way in driving ambition and she has established a shared sense of purpose to raise the aspirations of pupils and teachers alike. She is supported most effectively by a talented and energetic senior leadership team and by middle leaders and other staff who are committed to ongoing improvement. Consequently, teamwork is strong, staff morale is high and pupils' progress is accelerating. The senior team check the school's performance rigorously. They use their excellent coaching and mentoring skills to offer constructive advice and training and use their highly effective teachers very well to extend and share good practice. In this way, the quality of teaching and learning is rapidly improving. At the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of any discrimination and the school promotes equality for all pupils vigorously through this sophisticated monitoring and exemplary support. Outcomes for all groups of pupils, given their different starting points, are broadly similar, indicating that the school's commitment to equal opportunities is translated into practice.

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The effectiveness of the governing body is good. It fulfils all legal requirements, and all safeguarding arrangements were found to be effective at the time of the inspection. Good practice in safeguarding and child protection is evident in all areas of the school's work. The governing body bring a wealth of relevant experience to their deliberations, are very supportive of the school and are increasingly able to hold it to account for its work.

In this highly inclusive school, every child matters and individual needs are considered very specifically. The school works extremely well in partnership with external agencies and its partner school in the federation to secure extra support for those pupils who need it. Whilst there are good features in the school's existing work on promoting community cohesion, in the school itself for example, the school is aware that some elements have yet to be developed more fully. It is planning to forge links with groups in the local community and with schools in other parts of the United Kingdom and enhance other aspects of this work across the curriculum.

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	1
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle into the Nursery class quickly, are keen to learn, play together well and are well behaved. Staff provide well for children's welfare. The excellent space for the youngest children is generally used to good effect. It is well organised and well resourced, bright, airy, safe and secure. Inside spaces are fresh and clean, with clearly marked labels on drawers and containers so that children can find and put away equipment independently. Outside, the covered area and the garden spaces on different levels offer much, although their potential for learning is not currently being fully exploited. The teachers and teaching assistant plan and organise activities well but some activities could be further enriched, such as those for creative role play or writing. Very good records are kept of children's achievements, in photographs, notes and samples of children's work.

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However, this information is not always used rigorously enough to ensure that next steps in learning are sharply focused on children's differing needs. The children move into Year 1 working securely towards their early learning goals and this represents satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Although a much-lower-than-average number of parents returned the questionnaire, the school and its headteacher clearly enjoy the confidence and support of those parents and carers who did. A number of individual comments praised the high-quality care, support and guidance given to pupils, particularly to those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in the Centre for Pupils with Autism, and the big improvements seen in the school over the last year. The few criticisms were followed up as inspection trails during the visit. For instance, a small minority of parents and carers raised concerns regarding the help the school gave to pupils to enable them to lead healthy lives. Inspectors found, through discussion with a wide range of pupils and through lesson observations, that most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. A small minority of parents and carers raised concerns regarding the extent to which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found, through discussion with a wide range of pupils, through lesson observations and through observation of pupils at breaktime and at lunchtime, that their behaviour overall was good. The views of the parents interviewed informally at the beginning and end of the school day confirm the positive responses in the questionnaires.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lark Hall Primary School (Including Lark Hall Centre for Pupils with Autism) 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 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 445 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	44	26	52	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	30	31	62	2	4	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	36	26	52	4	8	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	34	26	52	3	6	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	17	34	26	52	4	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	32	25	50	5	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	28	27	54	5	10	1	2
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)	9	18	29	58	4	8	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	26	27	54	6	12	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	26	24	48	6	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	16	35	70	3	6	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	11	22	29	58	6	12	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	34	24	48	4	8	1	2

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. 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 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.



14 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Lark Hall Primary School (Including Lark Hall Centre for Pupils with Autism), London SW4 6PH

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we came to visit your school recently. A special thank you goes to those pupils who talked to us about their work. You go to a good school and it is getting better all the time. Here are some of the good things we found out about it.

' Your headteacher and the staff work very hard to provide you with the best education possible. They take good care of you and want to see you all achieve the best that you possibly can.

' You behave well around the school and in your classes and you look after each other well. You relish working in groups and helping each other to learn and you readily help your classmates when they find things difficult.

' You make good progress as you pass through the school. By the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you reach levels of attainment in most of your subjects that are close to those in most other schools.

To help you to do even better, we have asked your school to do the following:

' make sure that you are able to learn more things on your own and when teachers plan work for you, it is at just at the right level of challenge

' give you more opportunities to become involved in the life of the local community and gain understanding of communities elsewhere in the United Kingdom and in other countries

' help the children in the Nursery and Reception classes to make faster progress by making more use of the outside learning area and by planning for the next steps in their learning in more detail.

The inspection team wishes you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant

Lead inspector

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