

Beam Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101202
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	354959
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2011
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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	519
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Philip Walker
Headteacher	Leigh Culyer
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 28 lessons with 19 teachers being seen. Meetings were held with the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 187 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- How effective the school has been at narrowing the gap between the performance of boys and girls since the last inspection.
- The impact of marking and target setting on pupils' understanding of how they can improve their work.
- The effectiveness of subject leaders at sustaining the recent improvements in quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and progress.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school where just over two thirds of the pupils are from minority ethnic heritages. The largest of these groups are those of Black African heritage, who make up about one-third of the school's population. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. Their wide range of needs includes specific learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural, language and emotional difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly similar to that found nationally. The school has achieved a number of national awards, including the Activemark and the Healthy Schools Award. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2010 following the retirement of her long-serving predecessor. The school has very recently undergone extensive redevelopment, including the addition of a new suite of classrooms, meeting rooms and offices. There is a breakfast club managed by the governing body.

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 where pupils make good progress and achieve well. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree. One, representing the views of many, commented, 'I feel the school is very good at promoting the children's diversity, helping them to feel confident about who they are.' Another added that, 'I have so much praise for the teaching staff and for the school overall as it's a happy and safe learning environment'.

Significant improvement has been made to a number of areas of the school's provision since the last inspection, including the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum, and leadership and management. This means the school is now dismantling with skill and determination the barriers to learning reported at that time and pupils are achieving well. Together with the clear leadership of the new headteacher and governing body and the enthusiasm and commitment of staff, the school has good capacity to improve even further.

Children make a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage and quickly become confident and enthusiastic learners. Good teaching enables pupils to continue to make good progress as they move through the school and to attain above average levels by the time they leave. The school has closed the gap between the performance of boys and girls significantly since the last inspection.

These successes are underpinned by improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are much better at ensuring that work is well matched to the different abilities within the classes. This ensures that pupils make good progress and enjoy their learning. In a few lessons, the pace and challenge of learning is not sufficient to enable all pupils to do as well as they might, particularly the more-able. This is because teachers fail to capitalise on opportunities for pupils to explore their own ideas and work independently. There are good examples of marking in English, with clear advice on how pupils can improve their work. However, this is not yet as well developed or as consistent in other subjects.

Pupils are extremely well cared for and feel secure and happy. Safeguarding and health and safety arrangements are robust and regularly reviewed, helping to provide an extremely safe and secure learning environment. Pupils enjoy coming to school, attend regularly and behave well. The school's emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles, recognised in its national awards, ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy.

The well-organised breakfast club provides a good start to the school day and adds much to the children's enjoyment of school. The school has been successful at raising the rate

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attendance from its previously satisfactory levels. Attendance is now above average and continues to improve.

The good curriculum is imaginatively planned and contributes well to pupils' good learning and enjoyment. It is well balanced and there are effective links between the different areas of learning so that skills learned in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) are developed well in other lessons. There are many opportunities for promoting the creative arts, which is reflected in the numerous displays of high quality artwork around the school. However, there are missed opportunities within planning to guide the learning of higher attaining pupils.

Good leadership and management have established a caring environment where equality and diversity are valued and celebrated. Subject leaders and middle managers are increasingly effective at sustaining the recent improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and progress. The governors are making a good contribution to the strategic management of the school by acting as an effective 'critical friend'. The school improvement plan is based upon effective school evaluation and uses challenging targets well to accelerate the achievement for all groups of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase levels of challenge by providing more opportunities for pupils, especially the higher attainers, to explore their own ideas and work independently in order to increase their rates of progress.
- Ensure that teachers' marking consistently gives pupils a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Since the last inspection, the school has been successful at addressing underachievement and in raising attainment, especially for boys. There has been year-on-year improvement over the past three years in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Progress made is good, from levels that are lower than expected for the age group at the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils now achieve well throughout the school, including those with English as an additional language. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are positive about their learning and make similarly good progress to that of their peers. The few pupils who are at very early stages of learning English also make good progress and achieve well.

Pupils respond well to challenges and cooperate very effectively in pairs or groups when asked to do so. For example, pupils in a Year 5 ICT lesson used commercially available software to produce a leaflet using persuasive language extremely well. They were given opportunities to explore their own ideas, responded well to their teacher's high expectations of work and behaviour and were fully involved in the activities. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, pupils demonstrated excellent levels of skill at story telling. Their peers listened very attentively as they retold their stories and made helpful suggestions on how they could improve their techniques. This was particularly effective because the work was well matched to the different abilities within the class. However, pupils' enthusiasm wanes when they are not sufficiently stimulated or challenged by the work they are asked to do.

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In their responses to the questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of pupils said they feel extremely safe in school and they have great confidence in the adults around them. They really appreciate the racial harmony within the school community. One pupil commented, 'This school makes me want to cry with happiness and my old school made me want to cry with sadness.' Most pupils adopt active lifestyles and have a good understanding of the importance of a balanced diet in keeping healthy. Pupils take their many responsibilities around the school very seriously. They feel their ideas are listened to, for example through the activities of the school council. The pupils also make a good contribution to the local community through charity work and environmental projects.

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	1
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?

Whilst teaching is good overall, there is an increasing amount of outstanding practice and some that is satisfactory. In most lessons, teachers share the learning objective with the class so that all understand what they must do and achieve by the end of the lesson. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils were challenged to find different ways to solve a problem using their previous knowledge. Pupils say they enjoy working this way because 'It makes you think more deeply about your work and you feel more responsible for how well you are doing.' Teachers generally use their assessment of pupils' progress well to meet pupils' differing needs. However, there are inconsistencies. Occasionally, the pace of learning is too slow and tasks are not sufficiently demanding of all pupils,

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particularly the most-able. Pupils' work is regularly and supportively marked. The extent to which it helps them to improve, however, is variable.

Pupils have good opportunities to take part in educational visits and to work in partnership with other local schools. They are proud of their artistic and sporting achievements and eagerly participate in the many clubs and activities that are organised for them. The school also provides good opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of sustainability. The roof of the new building, for example, is covered with low growing plants to offset its carbon footprint and there are recharging points for electric cars in the school car park.

Adults place pupils' well-being at the centre of their work and this makes the school a happy place to be. The school works in very close partnership with parents and carers, volunteers and a variety of external agencies to support those children most at risk. The support they receive is both sensitive and considered and is very much valued by everyone. As one parent put it, 'Our daughter has physical needs and the school has helped her a lot. We cannot fault the school at all.' Pupils with a range of special educational needs and disabilities are also supported very well, which enables them to make the most of school life and to achieve as well as their peers.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of the school community. She works in close partnership with her deputy to provide a strong sense of purpose and ambition that is reflected in challenging targets for improvement. Staff morale is high and all are committed to the school's success. The headteacher's initial monitoring has quickly established an accurate view of what needs to be done to build on the school's existing strengths. This is reflected in the school's coherent plans for improvement, although there has not yet been sufficient time for the impact of these plans to be fully apparent. The expertise of the new management team is being developed so that members can take on more responsibility for ensuring consistency across classes and phases.

The governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures are of excellent quality and that all statutory requirements, including child protection and risk assessment, are regularly reviewed and approved. They have a good understanding of the school and the community it serves and are increasingly effective at holding the school to account for its performance.

The school is very active and effective in tackling discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. It is a very harmonious community. The school has excellent relationships

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with parents and carers and encourages them in their own personal development as well as assisting them in fully supporting their children's learning. There is a good range of constructive partnerships with other local schools and agencies to provide and enrich the pupils' learning experiences.

The contribution the school makes to community cohesion is exemplary. A clear plan is in place for promoting pupils' understanding from local, national and global perspectives. The school has been extremely successful at building relationships with the local community by working in partnership with local police officers, council workers and religious leaders. The school has, for example, cooperated with local leaders in building a community park so that families from the many different ethnic backgrounds can enjoy and share the open parkland. Links with contrasting communities within the United Kingdom are also strong as well as with a school in Kenya. The school is evaluating the impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of community both locally and globally in order to seek further ways to develop.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good teaching means that children achieve well from lower than expected levels of skills for their age. Children settle quickly and benefit from well-structured routines and organisation that help them to feel safe, secure and excited about coming to school. They have very positive attitudes to learning because staff have a good knowledge of the needs of the age range and plan exciting activities that are well matched to children's stages of development and interests.

There is a good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities across all areas of learning and children benefit from good opportunities to promote independence, investigation and communication skills. For example, children were seen planting seeds

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and developing their nature garden where they are growing vegetables, herbs and flowers. Adults used this opportunity well to develop children's language skills, their understanding of the natural world about them and their number skills. They worked collaboratively together, taking turns and sharing resources.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of acquiring English are identified quickly and supported effectively. Consequently all groups of children achieve well. Tracking shows that development over time is good and children from all backgrounds flourish in the caring environment. Behaviour is consistently good and children trust the adults who support them. Regular observations and assessments are made in each aspect of learning. However, there are missed opportunities to make full use of this information when planning the next steps in learning.

Leadership and management are strong. Great care is taken to guarantee that all children are equally involved. Safety and safeguarding are high priorities. The quality of provision is good and improving as staff strive to accelerate progress in all areas of learning. As a result, children make good progress and all groups achieve well.

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

About a third of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is similar to that typically found in primary schools. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school, its friendly atmosphere and the care given to pupils. They also indicated that their children are happy at school and are kept safe. The inspectors fully endorse these views. There were a number of written comments in praise of the staff and expressing satisfaction with the school. There were a few constructive criticisms, none of which emerged as recurring concerns. These were shared and discussed with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beam 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.

The inspection team received 187 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 519 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	140	75	44	24	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	129	69	57	30	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	112	60	70	37	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	120	64	61	33	4	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	115	61	71	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	112	60	70	37	4	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	95	51	84	45	4	2	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)	86	46	87	47	4	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	104	56	75	40	4	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	109	85	65	35	6	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	92	49	84	45	7	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	110	59	75	40	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	137	73	47	25	3	2	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beam Primary School, Dagenham RM10 9ED

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school recently.

We enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking with many of you. We were pleased to hear that you like your school and enjoy helping each other.

Yours is a good school, where staff and governors are working successfully. This means that there are lots of things that it does really well, but also that there are some things that could be even better.

We were particularly impressed that you want to do well. You behave well and help each other in all that you do. This means that your teachers can get on with teaching you new things and are not distracted by any misbehaviour. You also told us that you find your lessons interesting and usually challenging. To make them even better, we are asking your teachers to give you more opportunities to use your own initiative during lessons and to work independently so that you can make faster progress. You told us that teachers are particularly good at showing you how to improve your work in English. We have asked them to make sure they are equally clear at showing you how to improve your work in other subjects when they mark your books.

Each of you can play your part in making this school even better by continuing to work hard to meet the challenging targets teachers set for you.

Yours sincerely

John Earish

Lead inspector

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