

Phoenix Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100817
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	354900
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Natalia Power

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	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gilda Chambers
Headteacher	Maxine Mallett
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 30 lessons, taught by 16 different teachers, and talked to parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked in particular at its self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, the data collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding information and the minutes of governing body meetings. They considered the responses in 121 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers.

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

- What is the quality of the teaching and learning, and how effective are leaders and managers in ensuring its consistency across the school?
- Does the curriculum have sufficient breadth and variety?
- How effective are the school's measures to improve pupils' attendance?

Information about the school

This school, formerly named Eveline Lowe Primary School, is larger than others of its type. One third of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, and this proportion is higher than usual. Around three quarters of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average, but currently very few are at an early stage of learning the language. An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is below average.

In February 2007 the school was deemed to require special measures, because pupils' achievement and standards were low and leaders and managers were not successful in securing improvement. In October 2007, the school became part of a federation with Ilderton Primary School, under one executive headteacher and one governing body. In December 2007, the school expanded to become two-form entry. Following a series of monitoring visits, the school was inspected again in June 2009, when it was deemed to be providing a satisfactory quality of education and no longer to require special measures. The school is scheduled to move into purpose-built accommodation in the very near future.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It keeps pupils safe, and in this secure environment they develop some good personal qualities. They are good ambassadors for their school and are friendly and polite to visitors. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. As a result of the inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning, they make faster progress in some classes than in others. Examples of good teaching were seen during the inspection but, overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils' enjoyment is greatest when their involvement in their learning is most active. In some lessons, the pace of learning is too slow, tasks lack challenge, and pupils reflect their lack of involvement in their occasionally restless behaviour.

Leaders and managers keep careful records of how well individual pupils are doing, and use the information to provide sound support for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result of this tracking and also of helpful support given by teaching assistants, these pupils make similar progress to their classmates.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching. Induction procedures for new staff are good. A particular strength is the school's marking policy, which is consistently applied by all teachers. However, leaders and managers are less successful in ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Classroom observations made by leaders and managers are not always rigorous enough and are not always sufficiently sharply focused on how well pupils are learning.

The school is improving in some areas. Attendance has risen and is now average. The strong focus on English and mathematics has enabled pupils' attainment to improve in these subjects since the previous inspection, so they are now broadly average. However, the curriculum remains somewhat narrow and pupils do not always have enough opportunities to explore a range of topics. Leaders and managers have a broadly accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of their school, and are supported well in their self-evaluation by advice from the local authority. However, their plans for the future lack detail on how to bring about rapid and sustained improvement. Overall, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to at least good overall in order to raise attainment by:
 - raising the level of challenge for all pupils
 - improving the pace of learning in lessons, with more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve the programme of classroom observations with a sharper focus on how well pupils are learning.
- Provide greater breadth and variety in the curriculum so that pupils have more exciting opportunities to learn about a wider range of topics.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, and they report that they enjoy school and like their teachers. Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average and they make satisfactory progress from starting points which are broadly average.

Inspectors' scrutiny of lessons and pupils' work throughout the school indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in line with others, because they receive targeted support in class or in small withdrawal groups. The few pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress in line with others, because they, too, are given appropriate support and quickly catch up with their peers. Pupils from all backgrounds, and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, also make satisfactory progress.

In lessons which engage pupils and provide them with responsibility for their own learning, they make faster progress than in others where they are passive learners. For example, in one lively English lesson, drama was used to help Year 6 pupils explore the concept of differing types of questions. They were enthused by the excitement of acting in front of their peers, and the teacher challenged them to think of different types of questions from their own experience. Pupils enjoy learning more and make faster progress in lessons of this kind than in others which do not fully exploit their inquisitiveness and love of learning.

Pupils are confident and helpful to visitors. They have a good understanding of the importance of eating a healthy diet and taking exercise and particularly value their regular swimming lessons in the school's pool. They feel safe in school and are alert to dangers, for example from using the internet. Pupils report that there is no bullying in the school and that any occasional instances of unkindness are quickly dealt with by the adults. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, reflecting pupils' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to take responsibility within the school, and the older pupils relish helping out in the Nursery and Reception classes. Pupils acquire satisfactory basic skills in literacy, numeracy and in information and communication technology, and this, together with their regular attendance, prepares them adequately for the next stage of schooling.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	3

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?

Teachers are popular with the pupils, and a typical comment from one pupil was, 'They teach us a lot and care for us when we need help.' Pupils particularly value the opportunity to take charge of their own learning. One pupil reflected the findings of the inspection in the comment, 'It's more enjoyable when we can do our own topics, work with other people and go on the laptops.'

In the best lessons, teachers set a fast pace and use challenging tasks to stimulate pupils to think for themselves. For example, in one absorbing Year 4 English lesson, pupils enjoyed writing their own playscripts based on stories they had devised in groups. They particularly enjoyed evaluating their own and others' work, and rose to the challenge of editing the scripts to ensure they were of high quality. Here, the pupils' learning was rapid, because they were all engaged in discovering ideas for themselves, rather than being told. However, this is not the case in every lesson. In some lessons, too little is expected of the pupils and in these cases they make slower progress.

The curriculum has an appropriate focus on English and mathematics, and this has resulted in broadly average attainment at the end of Year 6. There is a sound focus on information and communication technology, and pupils particularly enjoy conducting their own research on their individual laptops. There is a satisfactory programme of visits to places of interest and additional activities. For example, pupils in the brass ensemble spoke with pride of playing to the school. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work, both in

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written and electronic form, shows that there are currently too few chances for the pupils to explore a wide range of topics to develop their curiosity about the world.

Pupils, including those children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, are given satisfactory care and support. The school works in appropriate partnership with external agencies to support pupils with a range of needs. The improvement in pupils' attendance over the past two years reflects consistent action taken by the school. Transition arrangements are sound at each new phase of schooling.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher works closely with the head of school, and together they have created a cohesive team and a happy school. Since the previous inspection, they have dealt with uncertainties about staffing and the school's future accommodation. Nevertheless, they have secured improvements in attendance and in the overall attainment of Year 6 pupils. Leaders and managers satisfactorily promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination, ensuring that all pupils, whatever their background or needs, make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils respect one another, and those from all backgrounds get on well together because discrimination is not tolerated.

The effectiveness with which leaders and managers lead the school to improve is satisfactory. Their plans for the future identify the broad areas in which the school needs to improve. Leaders and managers check the quality of teaching and learning satisfactorily, and provide valuable support and advice to teachers. However, lesson observations are not always sharply enough focused on how and what pupils are learning to ensure consistency across year groups. The governing body has a broadly accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and is ready to hold the school to account. However, members are not sufficiently involved in the life of the school to gain a clear understanding of the areas in which it needs to improve.

The school's safeguarding procedures are secure. Appropriate policies are in place and the school's procedures ensure that pupils are kept safe. Vetting procedures of adults who work with children are consistent and up to date. Staff receive regular training, and the child protection arrangements are regularly updated. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Leaders and the governing body are beginning to foster national and international links, and pupils have an adequate understanding of how other people live and worship in this country and abroad. Leaders and managers take satisfactory action to keep parents and carers informed about their children's progress and to involve them in the life of the school.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children receive a safe and secure start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes and make satisfactory progress. The school builds and maintains warm relationships with parents and carers. The 'interest books', to which children, parents and carers, and staff all contribute, are a particularly valuable tool in ensuring strong home?school links.

Adults provide kind and calm support and, as a result, the children develop generally good social and emotional skills, though behaviour is less good when they are left too long to their own devices. The children play together well, and are usually ready to share and take turns. There is generally a good balance of activities which they choose for themselves and those which adults suggest they should try. Where tasks have a good level of challenge, children rise to it. In one Reception class, for example, the children were engaged in counting coins, and became more actively involved when the teacher asked such stimulating questions as, 'How many coins do I need to buy this item?' Occasionally, adults are not on hand to guide the children in this way, and this prevents them gaining the most from every activity. Children with a range of additional needs are given suitably planned activities and appropriate specialist help.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactorily led and managed. The leader has ambitious plans to improve the children's education, and has done a great deal to offer the children as inviting an outdoor environment as is possible in view of the restriction in play space because of the building works. However, the teaching and learning, and the children's personal development, vary too much in quality across the classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and this has not been fully addressed by leaders and managers at all levels.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	3
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

An average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. All those who returned questionnaires, or who spoke to inspectors, felt that their children enjoy school, and the vast majority considered that the school keeps their children safe. The findings of the inspection are that safeguarding is sound and that pupils are healthy, happy and enjoy school. Most parents and carers considered that teaching is good. Inspectors found that some teaching is good but, overall, it is satisfactory. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour. The inspection team observed pupils' behaviour in and around the school and judged it to be satisfactory. A few parents and carers considered that the school takes insufficient account of their suggestions. Inspectors found that the school's engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory overall, with particular strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Overall, almost all parents and carers were happy with their children's experience at the school. One parent commented, 'I do believe that my child is in good hands.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Phoenix 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 121 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 356 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	63	44	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	60	44	36	3	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	62	51	56	46	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	56	51	42	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	62	51	55	45	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	46	60	50	4	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	48	56	46	5	4	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)	53	44	58	48	5	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	49	58	48	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	48	54	45	6	5	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	38	59	49	6	5	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	63	52	51	42	5	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	66	55	53	44	1	1	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.



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20 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Phoenix Primary School, Bermondsey, SE1 5JT

Do you remember when three visitors came to your school recently to watch you learn and play? Thank you for making us so welcome, and telling us your views. Here are some of the things we found.

- Your school gives you a satisfactory quality of education, which means that it does some things well but that some things need to be improved.
- Your school keeps you safe and healthy. You are polite and respectful to visitors. Attendance is better now than it used to be.
- You make satisfactory progress and leave school with results which are very much like those of pupils in the country as a whole. We want you to do even better. We have, therefore, asked the adults to make all teaching as good as the best, by giving all of you tasks that challenge you and give you more chances to take charge of your own learning. We enjoyed seeing your projects on flags and the work you had done on the Tudors on your mini-laptops. Now we want you to learn about other exciting topics.
- Those in charge work really hard for your benefit. We have asked them to have a good think about how to make your school even better. We have asked them to visit more of your lessons, to check carefully how well you are learning, and to make sure that all of you do as well as you can.

You told us how much you love your school, and you also showed us how much you care about one another by listening so carefully to the other pupils in the Year 2 assembly about the seaside. You can help in making your school even better. Try not to miss any school, unless you are ill, and always ask if there is anything you do not understand.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Natalia Power
Lead inspector

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