

Ashmount Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100432
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	376395
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2012
Lead inspector	Brian Netto

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	338
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Barry
Headteacher	Pana McGee
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 October 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Brian Netto	Additional inspector
Abigail Rourke	Additional inspector
Olson Davis	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 23 lessons or part-lessons taught by 14 teachers. Four of these lessons were jointly observed with a member of the school's leadership team. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, parents and carers, members of the governing body and different groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and pupils' work. They analysed 172 questionnaires from parents and carers, those from a sample of pupils in Key Stage 2, and 31 from staff.

Information about the school

Ashmount Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery. More than two thirds of the pupils come from minority ethnic communities. Most of these speak English as an additional language, although few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with statements and on school action plus, is around average. More pupils than average enter or leave the school at other than the normal times. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Since the previous inspection, the school has increased in size. There have been some staff changes, most notably the recent appointment of a new deputy headteacher. The school is due to relocate in October 2012 to a new building which will be the first carbon-neutral school in the country. The school runs a breakfast club, and some pupils attend a privately-run after-school club. The after-school club was not included in the inspection. The school has received a number of awards, including the Artsmark Gold.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Ashmount is a good school. This reflects the view of the overwhelming majority of parents and carers. Many spoke of its warm and welcoming environment. It has a number of particularly strong features. The school’s care, guidance and support for pupils and its partnerships with parents are notable strengths. The school is not yet outstanding as the comparatively recent improvements in teaching have not yet had time to have a full impact on improving pupils’ academic outcomes.
- Achievement is good. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a good start for children, who make good progress. The good, and often rapid, progress of pupils across the rest of the school, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as pupils who speak English as an additional language, demonstrates the good improvement made since the last inspection.
- Teaching is usually good throughout the school. It is characterised by strong positive relationships, effective planning to ensure that the learning is relevant to the needs and interests of the pupils, and high expectations. Marking and guidance are mostly good, although not consistent in all subjects and classes.
- Pupils’ behaviour and safety are good. This comes in part from the strong relationships the school has built with its parents and carers. Attendance is improving and the school recognises the need to maintain an unrelenting focus on using all possible strategies to encourage parents and carers to send their children to school regularly.
- The headteacher’s purposeful guidance for staff, including the management of their performance, has been successful in improving the quality of teaching and pupils’ performance across the school. Members of the governing body are well informed about the school and support its strategic direction, but are not yet using the robust information about pupils’ progress to promote further improvement. Middle leaders are developing their roles effectively but are not consistent in their use of data about pupils’ progress.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to accelerate progress across the school by:
 - ensuring that tasks are well matched to the needs of all pupils
 - embedding good quality marking in all areas of the curriculum so that pupils have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that all leaders, including middle leaders and governors, play an active role in using data in their evaluation of pupils' progress and their achievement.
- Raise attendance so that it is above the national average by June 2013, by:
 - building on current strategies to target pupils whose attendance falls below national averages.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are provided with a range of activities, supported by good visual prompts which promote good learning and independence. Activities are well planned for both outside and indoor environments and this leads to good engagement. For example, children in Reception were observed solving problems in measuring as a result of effective questions from the teacher and opportunities for them to explain their ideas. As a result, they made rapid rates of progress from starting points that are below those typically found for their age. By the end of the Reception Year most children reach the expected goals for learning. Across the school, pupils are making good progress in writing and their attainment by Year 6 is above average. Typically, pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning and are keen to take part in small group or whole-class discussions. Parents and carers are happy with the progress their children make. Pupils' weaker skills in writing and mathematics lower down the school are tackled vigorously and their progress is charted carefully. This enables teachers to target any pupils not making the progress they should and to intervene to help them catch up. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in this work. For example, one-to-one tuition in mathematics is helping pupils to become Bright Sparks.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress from their starting points. In 2011, pupils' attainment in reading dropped below national averages, whilst in Year 6 attainment levels were in line with national averages. The 15 minute reading project, as well as a systematic approach to the teaching of reading, is ensuring that pupils are now making better-than-expected progress in reading. Similarly, a concerted focus on the use of questioning and the promotion of problem-solving and investigation skills are ensuring that pupils also make good progress in mathematics. As a result, standards in mathematics are now above average and are much higher than in recent years.

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Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree that their children are taught well. Children in the Nursery and Reception Year engage in purposeful learning activities and are well supported by adults. As a result, they are able to learn independently. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is systematic and children make good progress in developing their language skills. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive effective and well-targeted support from teaching assistants.

In the best lessons, teachers explain tasks clearly and model good practice. The regular checking of learning and teachers' feedback ensure that pupils make good progress. Where questioning is strongest, staff use it to target and extend progress and also promote learning and thinking. Teachers have high expectations and have developed strong relationships with the pupils.

Strong subject knowledge and effective questioning by the teacher enabled pupils in Year 5 to develop a good understanding of story 'openings' and, as a result, they made good progress in their writing. Pupils in Year 6 made confident use of mathematical language in investigating the areas of different compound shapes as a result of effective modelling by the teacher. Where teaching is less successful, teachers do not explain the work clearly enough or check that pupils understand the task. Occasionally, the work is not sufficiently challenging, and is not well matched to the pupils' abilities. As a result, a small number of pupils drift off task during group activities or whole-class sessions.

Teaching, securely underpinned by an exciting and relevant curriculum, contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most marking is detailed and constructive, and provides pupils with guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers make sure that pupils know their targets, which are realistic, suitably challenging and clearly recorded. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school or across different subjects.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is typically good. Pupils cooperate well in lessons and show very positive attitudes towards their learning. Their enthusiasm enables them to develop good resilience when confronted with problems and challenges.

Pupils have a good understanding of cyber bullying, and say that visits from the police and fire service give them a better understanding of how to keep safe. Parents and carers strongly agree that the school keeps their children safe. The following comment reflects the views of many parents and carers. 'The school's very diverse pupil population is bound together by a very caring and inclusive attitude throughout, proving the best platform for good quality teaching to happen.'

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Relationships are strong, and pupils show considerable respect for each other and a sensitive awareness of differences. Pupils are very positive about their school, and are proud to be members of a cohesive and inclusive community which celebrates and values all contributions. As one pupil told the inspectors, 'School is as good as the holidays.' Pupils are committed to Good Manners, and wall displays are a constant reminder of what they believe these are. Close working with specialists, including a clinical psychologist and art therapists, ensures that the health and well-being of pupils is strongly supported. Attendance is now improving and is in line with the national average. Considerable efforts have been made to reduce the numbers of pupils whose attendance is low, and the school works in partnership with parents and carers to improve this even further.

Leadership and management

Soon after her arrival eight years ago, the headteacher led the school out of special measures. She provides strong and ambitious leadership. Rapid improvements have helped the school to become successful. The more recent restructuring of the leadership team is helping the school to improve the monitoring systems so that there is a more accurate assessment of the strengths and areas for development across the school. A more robust system for collecting and using information on pupils' progress is helping to drive improvements. Senior leaders model good practice around the school. These systems enable the school to provide a forensic analysis of the pupils' needs and, as a result, close the gap between pupils' attainment and the national average. This shows it has clear capacity to improve further. Performance management provides the basis for professional development and targeted support. Staff morale is high and, in spite of recent staffing changes, staff are fully supportive of the headteacher's ambitions. As one teacher said, 'Our pupils are a shining example of what a mixed community can achieve.' In recent years, the school has gained in popularity and, as a result, has increased in roll and is oversubscribed. The school is now planning a move to a new site later this year.

Governors use their extensive knowledge of the school to good effect to support improvement. Partnerships with parents and carers are strong. An overwhelming majority of the parents and carers that responded to the survey fully support the school's ambitions. Regular parent volunteers have been trained and support the school's targeted reading programme.

The curriculum is planned in response to the needs and interests of the pupils, and has a strong link to real-life contexts. Extensive use is made of outdoor learning and visits, and there is a strong focus on pupils having experience of the arts and different types of sports. For example, more-able pupils are identified early on and are provided with opportunities to develop their creative writing skills. This was demonstrated in a session led by a parent governor who used picture postcards of famous paintings to stimulate imagination and thinking. Parents and carers praise the range of activities on offer. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of after-school clubs. In addition, visits and visitors enrich pupils' experience, as many recalled the recent visit by a Nobel Prize winner in science who spoke about his

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experiences as a child. As a result, the curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Local partnerships with a diverse range of private and state schools ensure that staff have a breadth of experience, and also enrich the experiences of the pupils. The school's strong commitment to providing a safe and secure environment ensures that all statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding are met. Pupils' individual needs are supported well, and discrimination is tackled effectively, reflecting the school's firm commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashmount Primary School, London N19 3BH

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being told about all the good things going on at your school and how much you like going there. One of you told us that it was as good as the holidays! You told us about how inspired you were by the recent visit to the school by Sir Paul Nurse, a Nobel Prize winner in science. You are looking forward to moving into your new school buildings in the autumn. We were impressed by the way you took part in lessons and always tried to do the best you can.

We would like to tell you what we found about your school. It is a good school and it has some strengths. Staff look after you well, and they have developed very strong relationships with your parents and carers. You behave well and enjoy taking part in lessons. Most of you are now making good progress.

Your headteacher and the staff are keen to make the school even better. We have asked your leaders and teachers to help you make even faster progress by doing the following things.

- Ensure the work you do in all lessons matches your abilities.
- Make sure that teachers write comments in your books that tell you what you need to do to improve.
- Use information about how well you are doing when planning your lessons.
- Work hard to make sure that all of you attend school every day.

I hope you will play your part by continuing to work hard and do your best to make your school even better.

Yours sincerely

Brian Netto
Lead inspector

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