

Highlands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	131013
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	395371
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead inspector	Jennifer Barker

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	708
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Runeckles
Headteacher	Margaret Buttress
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
School address	Highlands Gardens Ilford IG1 3LE
Telephone number	020 8554 0044
Fax number	020 8518 2322
Email address	admin.highlands@redbridge.gov.uk

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jennifer Barker	Additional Inspector
Olson Davis	Additional Inspector
Carole Beedham	Additional Inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching in 29 lessons throughout the school. They had discussions with pupils, talked to them about their work and listened to pupils read. Meetings were held with staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books, the school learning plan, minutes of the governing body and leaders' monitoring of teaching. They also looked at the questionnaire responses of a sample of 99 pupils, 25 staff and 170 parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

Highlands Primary School is much larger than average. There have been some unavoidable, but significant, staffing issues during recent years which have had an impact on middle leadership. A very high proportion of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups and the numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language is significantly above the national average. The largest group of pupils are from Pakistani heritages. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those who have statements or are at school action plus, is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also average. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has achieved Artsmark Gold status, has Healthy Schools status and is accredited for information and communication technology (ICT).

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school.. The school is not good because teaching, learning and assessment are inconsistent in quality and there are weaknesses in how leaders promote good teaching. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are sound, but analysis of the key strengths and weaknesses in lessons is not robust enough to inform future planning. Leaders and including the governing body, do not have a clear enough, strategic overview of the key priorities for improving the quality of teaching. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory for most groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. It is good for the youngest children, particularly for those who speak English as an additional language. Data for the current Year 6 cohort indicate a return to standards of attainment in line with national expectations. Pupils’ progress is accelerating in all year groups.
- Teaching is improving and is satisfactory overall.. Teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to plan appropriate activities and use appropriate resources to challenge all learners.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Harmonious relationships exist between pupils of different backgrounds. Pupils say that they are safe, secure and enjoy school life.
- The leadership of teaching through the management of performance is satisfactory and outcomes are improving. Leaders and managers reacted quickly to the fall in standards last year by putting into place effective additional daily opportunities for developing reading skills and underpinning knowledge of calculations in mathematics. Outcomes from the monitoring of teaching do not always inform future planning or professional development activities. Action planning is not always sharp enough in specifying timelines and measures of pupils’ progress. The satisfactory curriculum has particular strengths in promoting the pupils’ good spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve strategic planning so that leaders and managers, including the governing body,:
 - ensure that development planning is based on a robust analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and key priorities for improvement are identified effectively
 - strengthen action planning by ensuring timelines for the completion of work are clear and progress outcomes are measurable.
- By July 2013, raise achievement and improve teaching across the school by:
 - using assessment information more effectively to ensure all groups of pupils are appropriately challenged and that tasks, activities and resources are closely matched to pupils' specific needs and abilities
 - developing the skills of teachers to use a range of assessment strategies during lessons and to adapt tasks to involve pupils in understanding how to improve their work
 - improving the consistency of marking and assessment across the school
 - providing opportunities for pupils to investigate and research their own work in lessons, and for problem solving in mathematics.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their starting points. The majority of parents say that their children progress well. Pupils enter the school with basic skills below those expected and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Those who are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language make fast gains in fluency. Pupils start Year 1 with slightly below average attainment. The rate of progress is variable across Key Stages 1 and 2, but attainment in reading in Years 2 and 6 is average. Opportunities for planned, purposeful writing across the curriculum have had an impact on improving writing across year groups. Additional sessions for the most-able pupils have resulted in an improved rate of progress and attainment in writing and mathematics.

The daily focus on reading and mathematics since the start of this academic year has accelerated progress in these subjects rapidly across all year groups and has reversed the dip in attainment in 2011, when results were significantly below average.

Pupils are developing effective strategies for fluent reading, including the use of phonics (letters and sounds work) and self-correction to increase understanding. Pupils throughout the school were keen to talk about their reading and what they had learnt, for instance from a factual book about lizards. Lower-attaining pupils are able to use phonic knowledge for decoding, but sometimes the effort means they lose the meaning, particularly where their sight knowledge of tricky common

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words is less well developed. Further up the school, pupils' reading and writing skills are suitably supported through drama and role-play activities. For example, Year 3 used puppets to create stories based on those written by a well-known author. Such work helps pupils develop a secure understanding of story structure and puppet work helps to develop pupils' communication and speaking skills.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers as a result of a range of additional interventions. This is also true of those pupils from Pakistani heritages. However, teachers' use of assessment to plan for these pupils' specific needs is variable in quality. On occasions support staff are used effectively, but there are times when they help pupils do the same work as others in the class. This means that tasks are not always pitched at the right level and support does not promote independent learning. At times, opportunities are missed for pupils to use additional visual and practical resources to further promote their linguistic skills.

Children who speak English as an additional language are making good progress. This is because they are provided with a good range of speaking and listening opportunities linked to the range of worthwhile linguistic activities in Reception.

Quality of teaching

The satisfactory teaching includes a number of strengths which are also recognised by parents. In the best lessons, pupils collaborate and discuss their work with each other and develop good social skills. Where this occurs across the curriculum it contributes well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. Good relationships exist between teachers and pupils and this ensures a positive climate for learning. In general, behaviour management is good and learning is rarely disrupted. In some lessons, teachers use assessment strategies systematically, such as focused questioning and whiteboard tasks to determine what pupils know and can do. Such teaching ascertains pupils' errors and misconceptions and alters activities to increase levels of understanding. However, such good practice is not consistent across the school. Sometimes pupils sit for too long listening to the class teacher and become restless when they have been inactive for long periods. Teachers do not always adapt tasks as they go along to accelerate learning or to promote independent learning. As a result, pupils' progress is slower than it could be. The use of questioning is not always effective. Too often responses are sought from a minority of pupils and quieter pupils listen passively and do not have the confidence to ask questions to clarify their knowledge and understanding.

Information gained from assessment is not always used well to ensure work is properly matched to individuals' capabilities. For example, sometimes, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs find tasks too difficult and the more able find them too easy. Progress in lessons is better when teachers plan tasks around practical activities. For instance, in a mathematics lesson about time measurement, pupils used clock faces and digital time displays to support learning

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effectively and, consequently, they made good progress. Disabled Pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall as too often they do not have additional resources to support their learning at the right level.

All pupils are clear about their targets and they regularly refer to them at the back of their books. There are some strengths in marking, particularly when teachers write comments on how pupils can improve their work and they have opportunities to respond to teachers' suggestions. Pupils say they find this process very helpful and constructive feedback contributes well to improving achievement. However, marking is inconsistent across the school. In too many books comments made were not sufficiently evaluative and linked to pupils' targets or lesson success criteria.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good and pupils are safe in school. Parents and carers say that their children are safe in school and they, along with their children think that behaviour is good. One parent described the school as having a positive atmosphere, with good relationships among teachers, children and other staff and with a vision based on moral values and good attitudes. Inspectors observed generally good behaviour in lessons, and saw some outstanding behaviour in the playground. School data show that behaviour is typically good. Discussions with pupils show that they have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber safety, and all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, feel very safe in school. Bullying is not an issue, there are few disputes and these are quickly resolved. Behaviour for learning is generally good. Pupils persevere with tasks and, when given the opportunity to do so, work independently and can think and learn for themselves, particularly in the early years. There has been improvement in attendance this academic year. It is now average and improving rapidly. The 'Ready, Get Set, Go' start to the day, as well electronic registration, has improved punctuality and ensures that pupils make a prompt start to their learning.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders and the governing body have satisfactorily steered the school through a period of significant staff changes. This instability contributed to the fall in standards last year. The leadership team has worked hard to drive improvement and new middle leaders are involved in satisfactorily monitoring and evaluating the school's work and improving the quality of teaching. Since the start of this academic year, the concerted and rigorous approach to raising achievement, including the setting of ambitious targets, has raised expectations and attainment. Progress is tracked systematically with termly meetings with class teachers and suitable interventions and strategies to support pupils who are falling behind are put into place. The governing body has set challenging targets for this academic year, and has regular reports on progress. Governors undertake focused monitoring visits to find things out for themselves to call the school to account for its outcomes.

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The development of the cultural aspects of the satisfactory curriculum is a strength of the school. Work in religious education and art helps pupils develop an understanding of cultural diversity. Pupils develop a range of musical skills and have good opportunities to learn instruments from many cultures, from Chinese gongs to African drums and playing the sitar. Moral and social elements are suitably developed through opportunities for collaboration and discussion in lessons and through specific activities such as circle time. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to research and investigate their work during lessons and for problem solving, for instance using data, in mathematics. Parents and carers appreciate the curriculum workshops set up by the school and find them helpful in supporting their children at home.

Assessment practices have been improved since the previous inspection and they are sound. This together with rising standards, accelerating progress in each year as a result of improved teaching, demonstrates that the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. However, analysis of teaching quality and action planning is not rigorous enough at present. Arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements. Absence is followed up and a range of strategies are used to improve attendance, including working closely with families. Accelerated progress across all groups this year demonstrates the school is effective in tackling discrimination and promoting satisfactory equality of opportunity for all. This is also evident in its very inclusive ethos.

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.

15 June 2012



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highlands Primary School, Ilford IG1 3LE

Thank you all for your warm welcome when inspectors visited your school. We all enjoyed talking to you about your school and your work, and seeing the wonderful displays of your art work throughout the school. Inspectors judge that your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

The school has some important strengths, for instance:

- the youngest children are making good progress because teaching is effective and the curriculum meets their needs well
- those of you in other years are making satisfactory progress and your mathematics, reading and writing skills are improving
- you find the internet links helpful for continuing your work at home
- you get on well with each other and enjoy friendships with others from many different backgrounds
- you feel safe in school and know how to keep yourselves safe when using computers and phones, and on the roads.

Although you are making better progress with your work this year, we have asked your headteacher, teachers and the governing body to help you improve further by:

- using the information they have about your abilities, and things you find difficult, to ensure activities are planned and are suitably adapted to challenge you to do even better
- making sure that all teachers mark your work so that you know how to improve it and have time to practise their suggestions for improvement
- involving you more in your learning by giving you opportunities to research and investigate your work and use your mathematics skills for problem solving
- improving the way leaders identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and use the information gained to further raise standards
- improving the way the school plans its future development.

You can help yourselves by asking teachers questions about your work.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Barker
Lead inspector

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