

INSPECTION REPORT

DOLLIS JUNIOR SCHOOL

Mill Hill, London NW7

LEA area: London Borough of Barnet

Unique reference number: 101355

Headteacher: Mr D A Heasman

Reporting inspector: Mr Christopher Gray
21037

Dates of inspection: 7 - 9 February 2000

Inspection number: 190182

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	7-11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Pursley Road Mill Hill London
Postcode:	NW7 2BU
Telephone number:	020-8959-4728
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S Harrison
Date of previous inspection:	24 - 27 June 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Dollis Junior is a Foundation School (formerly known as Grant Maintained) situated in Mill Hill in the London Borough of Barnet. The school is for children aged seven to eleven, and has 470 full-time pupils (247 boys and 223 girls). Children's attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average.

Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds but, overall, their socio-economic background is broadly similar to the national picture. Approximately 21 per cent of pupils are entitled to receive a free school meal, which is similar to the national average for junior schools. Almost 36 per cent of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language, which is very high compared with most schools. Five of these children (3 per cent of the total) are at an early stage of English language acquisition. About 46 per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority groups, which is also much higher than most schools. There are 147 pupils on the special needs register; at approximately 31 per cent of the school's roll, this is above the national average. Five pupils have statements of special educational need, and, in percentage terms (one per cent), this is below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Dollis Junior is a very successful school which is popular with parents and has a good reputation in the community, which is well deserved. Pupils work hard and have very good attitudes to their work. The inspection finds that the standards pupils achieve when they leave the school are above national averages in English, mathematics and science and well above the average for similar schools. The overall quality of teaching is very good. The school is excellently led by the headteacher and senior staff and the governors are closely involved through effective committees. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The inspection finds that pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is above the national average
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good
- The teaching is very good overall; this is supported by good curricular provision
- The quality of leadership from the headteacher, deputy head and senior management team is excellent and, with the thorough support of governors, produces a very effective school
- The school makes excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good
- Parents have justifiably very good opinions about the school
- The school's finances are managed very efficiently

What could be improved

- Although teachers make good provision for higher attaining pupils in many lessons, this is not consistent in all classes and subjects

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1996. The key issues concerned lesson objectives and the marking of pupils' work. Good progress has been made; teachers are clear as to what pupils are to learn in each lesson, they ensure that the pupils are also clear and they evaluate their success together at the close of many lessons. Pupils' work is thoroughly marked and a regular check on its quality is kept by senior staff. In addition, the school has made significant improvement in its National Curriculum test results, both at the average and the higher levels. There are now excellent opportunities for pupils to become involved in the running of the school and to make a positive contribution to its life and to show independence. Overall, the progress made since the last inspection has been very good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	C	B	C	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	C	A	B	A	
science	D	C	C	A	

The table indicates that pupils' attainment is well above average compared with similar schools, which shows that the school is achieving good standards. Comparison with national trends shows that the school's overall results are improving at a similar rate. In 1999, pupils' achievements exceeded the school's targets, though these were somewhat cautious. Current standards in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils are keen to learn and almost all enjoy coming to school. They are independent and take pride in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the pupils in and around the school is very good. They show remarkable self-discipline for pupils of their age.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; pupils learn to be independent and they are enthusiastic to take responsibilities around the school. There is a secure, family atmosphere in the school where adults and children treat each other with respect.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is very good or better in 52 per cent of lessons and good or better in 92 per cent; it is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in only 4 per cent. All teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and most respond well to produce a good classroom ethos where learning is seen as the object of the day and enjoyable. Teachers help pupils to understand the relevance and purpose of what they are doing and this enables them to learn at a very good rate. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is also very good. There are a few occasions when lesson objectives for higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently focused on how they will be

effectively challenged. Literacy and numeracy are taught well and information technology is incorporated successfully into many lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad & balanced; there is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities and residential visits to broaden pupils' experience.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good, though this sometimes involves pupils in missing collective worship or lessons in foundation subjects.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes good provision for the pastoral support of these pupils; the local education authority has recently withdrawn funding with the result that the few pupils who are at an early stage of English language acquisition, who are new arrivals, are not receiving specialist support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent provision. Experiences are planned across the curriculum to encourage children to reflect on what is important in life, and moral and social growth are an important part of this. Pupils learn to appreciate the depth and variety of the many cultures represented in the school family.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils and provides them with very good welfare.

The school provides a relevant and interesting curriculum; planning is very thorough and is used effectively; all statutory requirements are met. Pupils themselves are encouraged to be aware of the welfare needs of other pupils. Procedures for logging accidents or health and safety problems are only informal.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent; the headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school and he, the deputy headteacher and the senior management team work together in a clearly defined way to achieve it.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well; governors have very effective committees and are closely involved in the planning and monitoring.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has made very good progress since the last inspection because of the rigour with which all stages of teaching and learning are evaluated and improved.
The strategic use of resources	Staffing, resources and accommodation are used efficiently. Overall spending is driven by priorities related to a rigorous analysis of standards.

The success of the school stems from the expert management, where all initiatives are planned and evaluated in detail. Overall the school applies best value principles wisely to the acquisition and use of its resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress • Behaviour in the school is good; the school is helping children to become mature and responsible; there is a good range of extra-curricular activities • Children are set the right amount of homework • The school is well led and managed; teaching is good and children are expected to work hard and achieve their best • The school works closely with parents; they are kept well informed about how their children are progressing and would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of respondents to the questionnaire expressed doubts about aspects of behaviour

A small number of respondents to the questionnaire took the opportunity to mention other issues. Almost all of these gave high praise to the school and its staff, summed up by one parent who wrote, "This is an excellent school." Parents at the pre-inspection meeting were also very positive about the school. Inspectors endorse parents' praise of the school. Inspectors observed behaviour closely during the lunch break as well as at other times and found that behaviour overall is very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is above the national average

1. The pupils' results at Level 4 and above in National Curriculum tests in 1999 were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. At the higher level, results were well above average in mathematics, above average in English and average in science. Using the average point score (where pupils' attainments at all levels are taken into account), overall results were average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Overall results in all three subjects were well above the averages for similar schools.
2. Current standards in Year 6 are above average in all three subjects. In mathematics, teachers plan clearly for extension work for higher attaining pupils; for example, when working on number patterns, average pupils experimented to discover which numbers are square and which triangular; higher attaining pupils went on to try and identify a link between the two sorts. Higher attaining pupils are also challenged appropriately in some English and science lessons. For example, one class was studying poetry and focusing on the meaning of proverbs; higher attaining pupils were encouraged to analyse the poems and get behind them to the mood and feeling of the writer. They were able to explain the meanings underlying proverbs. In a science lesson, where pupils were adding components to series and parallel circuits, higher attaining pupils were carefully questioned to develop their understanding.
3. There are good opportunities across the curriculum for extended writing. Year 6 pupils keep a war-time diary of a child, reflecting thoughtfully on how real events might have affected their feelings. Year 4 pupils express what is signified to them on studying a painting. Information technology skills are developed well in specific lessons on the computer and by the regular use of specialised software across the curriculum - for example, using electronic sensors to test heat insulation, or CD-ROMs to search for information in history and geography work. A good link between literacy and information technology was made in a Year 3 lesson on using word processing to make a cover for a topic folder. Pupils learnt that the size of the writing reflects the relative importance of the information, and one girl observed that, on the cover of a Roald Dahl book, his name is often the biggest object.

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good

4. Pupils are nearly always ready to start their lessons; they get their books ready with the minimum of fuss and sit expectantly so that little time is wasted and teachers are able to make a good impact straight away. Teachers use this opportunity well so that what is to be learnt and how it fits in with what went previously are clear at the outset. Pupils generally react with enthusiasm when the plan for the lesson is explained. Pupils' books show that a large amount and range of work is covered, and the presentation of most work is of a good standard.
5. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility and act in a very mature way by the time they reach Year 6. In the playground, it is not uncommon to see older pupils intervene to prevent squabbles or to make sure that a younger pupil is not upset. Children who have no-one to play with can wait by the "friendship stop" and other pupils see the value of giving them company. Parents report that their children value being treated in this responsible way.
6. Behaviour in lessons is very good overall, though some Year 3 pupils take a time to settle into the self-disciplined routine of "The Dollis Way" (the agreed set of behavioural standards). This enables teachers to work with small groups whilst the rest work hard on their task. In a Year 5 information technology lesson, this enabled the teacher to make the best use of the only computer, so that nearly a third of the class took turns at a complex task under the teacher's direction whilst the rest got on efficiently. In this room, the teacher uses a "noise meter" which works well and involves the pupils in understanding the need for a required noise level.

The teaching is very good overall; this is supported by good curricular provision

7. All teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and most respond well to produce a good classroom ethos where learning is seen as the object of the day and enjoyable.
8. Planning is very effective. Long and medium term plans are thorough and well designed to enable them to give good support when teachers plan on a shorter term basis. Lesson objectives are clear and are explained to pupils in a way which helps them to see the relevance and purpose of what they are asked to do. Pupils in Year 5 were learning about taking notes and understood that it is a good way of writing down a lot of information quickly from a variety of sources, in order for the information to be represented later. The information they were using was about the human brain, and the importance of clarity in the final presentation was emphasised for them when a parent who is a doctor came in to check that what they ultimately wrote was factual. This added great excitement to the task.
9. There are a few occasions when lesson objectives for different groups of pupils are not sufficiently focused on how higher attaining pupils will be effectively extended. In a minority of cases, what higher attaining pupils are expected to do is not challenging enough - for example, recording the findings of an experiment differently, or writing in a more descriptive way. The starting point of activities is sometimes the same as for average pupils, so that the extension work is only reached if there is time.
10. Learning is very effective in almost all lessons because teachers use the time well. Daily plans show when to move from one section to the next and teachers are mostly very good at gauging the right amount of time to allot each part to maximise the opportunity for learning. In another Year 5 lesson on note-taking, pupils took part in an exercise on an overhead projector to help them to see the difference between key ideas in a sentence and unnecessary words. Only a few minutes were spent on this, but the success of their note-taking in the next activity showed that they had grasped the point.

The quality of leadership from the headteacher, deputy head and senior management team is excellent and, with the thorough support of governors, produces a very effective school

11. The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school and he, the deputy headteacher and the senior management team work together in a clearly defined way to achieve it. The head is an excellent communicator and ensures that all staff and governors understand his vision and share it. What has enabled the school to make so much progress since the last inspection is the rigour with which all stages of teaching and learning are evaluated. Planning is monitored to ensure that it fulfils the school's aims and objectives; teaching is monitored to make the most of strengths and to give support where there are weaknesses; pupils' work is closely scrutinised to make sure that the objectives set out in the planning are being achieved, that the standards are what they should be and that teachers are doing their best to promote learning through their marking. Who is involved in which stage of this monitoring and what are the criteria to be followed are clearly laid down and understood by all. Staff who are new to the school receive supportive guidance as to what is expected of them and how they will fulfil their part. Governors have very effective committees and are closely involved in the planning and monitoring. All told, this makes the school function smoothly where all staff and governors have an important contribution to make.

The school makes excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

12. This was a strength of the school at the time of the last inspection and this position has been developed even further. Spiritual development is planned for in lessons, such as the opportunity to write poems after a visit to a church, and in assemblies. Pupils are encouraged to assume responsibility not only for themselves but also for other children - as when an older pupil was seen to remind younger ones that it is unacceptable to make rude remarks about what others are eating. Adults provide good examples of care and consideration. Much work has gone into anti-bullying policies and parents spoke in praise of their effect. The School Council was already running at the last inspection; it has continued to give pupils a genuine feeling that Dollis is their school and that they can influence it for the good. Provision for cultural development was not as evident as the other areas in 1996; this has now been strengthened, as is shown by the recent cultural evenings which help to celebrate some of the traditions which make up the school family. Parents frequently address groups of children on their beliefs and traditions.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good

13. There is a very thorough policy which is administered well. Individual education plans are full and have very clear targets. Staff keep careful track of each pupil and, by careful use of targets and reviews, are able to move pupils down as well as up the stages. This careful monitoring means that, whilst the proportion of pupils on the special needs register is above the national average, the proportion with statements is below the national average. However, some of the withdrawal sessions involve pupils' missing assemblies and subjects other than English, mathematics and science; this was the case at the time of the last inspection.

Parents have very good opinions about the school and they are justified

14. Parents are kept well informed about the life of the school through the weekly School News. Amongst other things, children write about the week's visitor to the Monday assembly; parents are able to see examples of their good writing - for example, "I thought he was very nervous and yet he seemed calm. He also looked very enthusiastic about the questions." Parents' suggestions are taken very seriously; when several suggested a cultural evening to encourage pride in minority languages and literacy, the school organised a Turkish cultural evening and is shortly to hold a Chinese evening.
15. In the response to the questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting, parents spoke warmly about the standards the school enables their children to achieve and the high levels of support and welfare afforded them.

The school's finances are managed very efficiently

16. The school works hard to make the most of its finances. Overall spending is driven by priorities related to a rigorous analysis of standards. Care is taken to make sure that goods and services are obtained at competitive prices. Financial planning is undertaken by the finance committee who receive good support from a financial adviser and a close watch is kept on monthly spending; for example, a projected deficit at the start of the financial year has been considerably whittled down.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Although teachers make good provision for higher attaining pupils in many lessons, this is not consistent in all classes and subjects

17. In 1998 and 1999, the percentage of pupils who achieved the higher level (Level 5) in National Curriculum tests was significantly higher in mathematics than in English or science. An analysis of pupils' work shows that this difference is present also in the day-to-day work of the school. Teachers are providing satisfactorily for higher attaining pupils in most lessons, but they are doing it better in mathematics.
18. In mathematics, teachers generally plan activities for higher attaining pupils which begin at an appropriate starting point. For example, a Year 6 lesson was on manipulating fractions; the higher attaining pupils were asked to work on adding mixed fractions, with the need to find the lowest common denominator, whereas average pupils were using fractions of the same denominator to make up whole numbers and lower attaining pupils were working on simple equivalence.
19. This approach is used in other lessons, but not to the same extent. The provision for higher attaining pupils in these lessons is satisfactory, but it is not as good as it is overall in mathematics. There are occasions, for example, when a difference is made to the outcome by particular support for lower attaining pupils, but higher attaining pupils are performing the same task as all others. This is also true of the work for some higher attaining pupils in Year 3 in mathematics.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

20. This is a good school with no major weaknesses; there are therefore no key issues. However, the following area for further development should be considered:

- * ensure greater consistency across all classes and subjects in the matching of activities to pupils' learning needs, by:
 - planning different learning objectives for pupils of different prior attainment;
 - ensuring that the activities provided for higher attaining pupils begin at an appropriately high level.
- (See paragraphs 9 and 17-19)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	25
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	48	40	4	4	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	470
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	98

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	147

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	169

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.7

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	55	63	118

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	44	43	47
	Girls	48	47	51
	Total	92	90	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79	76	83
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	43	42	47
	Girls	50	48	50
	Total	93	90	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79	76	82
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	14
Black – African heritage	41
Black – other	7
Indian	43
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	36
White	252
Any other minority ethnic group	66

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	21.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.92
Average class size	29.19

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	146

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
	£
Total income	1,093,782
Total expenditure	1,059,729
Expenditure per pupil	2,383
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	34,053

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	467
Number of questionnaires returned	94

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	26	1	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	55	43	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	35	3	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	50	3	2	0
The teaching is good.	74	24	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	33	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	22	0	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	21	4	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	66	31	1	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	83	15	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	29	3	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	65	30	3	1	1

Other issues raised by parents

A small number of parents took the opportunity to mention other issues. Almost all of these gave high praise to the school and its staff, summed up by one parent who wrote, "This is an excellent school." Parents at the pre-inspection meeting were also very positive about the school.