



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report

Waterside School

Greenwich Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 6 and 7 December 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Waterside School
Type of school:	Special
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Miss S Vernoit
Address of school:	Robert Street Plumstead London SE18 7NB
Telephone:	020 8317 7659
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mrs M Offerman
Local education authority area:	Greenwich
Unique reference number:	1133401
Name of reporting inspector:	Mrs G Fox HMI
Dates of inspection:	6 and 7 December 2004

Introduction

1. Waterside School is situated in Plumstead, in the London Borough of Greenwich. It is a special school for pupils of primary age who have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, and who have either been excluded from their mainstream school or are at risk of being excluded. It includes an outreach service to local mainstream primary schools, supporting around 90 pupils. The 33 pupils on roll are all boys, although the school does admit girls. Pupils attend on either a part-time or a full-time basis and classes are organised flexibly as pupils attend for varying lengths of time. Five pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need, three are from minority ethnic groups and two are of mixed heritage. Two pupils speak English as an additional language and 14 are eligible for free school meals, although free meals are provided for all the pupils. Attainment on entry is low affected by the fact that many of the pupils have experienced difficult circumstances or have had unsuccessful school experiences.

2. The school was inspected in May 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of May 2003. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on three occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In December 2004, two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of May 2003.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- standards are slowly rising. The pupils' work is scrutinised and National Curriculum levels of attainment are ascribed systematically and with rigour. Some pupils produce work of reasonable quality in some subjects and good work in literacy. The results of the national tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2004 were better than the previous year;
 - standards in literacy and numeracy remain low. Too many pupils have limited skills in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. However, better assessment of the pupils' individual needs has helped the teachers set an accurate baseline and make suitable plans;
 - the pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Some are making good advances in developing their speaking and listening skills, and very good progress in reading. The pupils' writing has improved, but is still weak for those who are reluctant to try;
 - in science, the pupils have good practical skills and positive attitudes towards the subject. They use scientific vocabulary appropriately and are progressing
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at a good pace. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a separate subject and there are good plans for its further development. The pupils have a reasonable understanding of the applications of ICT, use a range of functions and are well motivated to learn new skills;

- the school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. The pastoral needs of the pupils are identified and met well; staff work very skilfully to promote the pupils' personal and social development;
 - there has been a marked improvement in the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; most have good or very good attitudes towards their work and are proud of their achievements. Generally, they behave well in lessons and during breaks, show respect to staff and move sensibly around the school;
 - the attendance and punctuality of the pupils has improved; the school staff and the welfare service work well together to promote and encourage attendance;
 - communication with parents and carers is improving and the school works well with them. The home/school liaison officer is in regular contact with the parents and carers and keeps careful records. Parents appreciate the way they and their children are valued and treated by all staff;
 - the school has a positive ethos and is a friendly, safe and well-ordered community. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. The respect and care which the staff have for the pupils is exemplary and the pupils respond very well. The staff are committed to the school's values and work hard to promote the pupils' progress and well-being;
 - the school provides an effective curriculum, which includes the National Curriculum. Suitable policies and schemes of work underpin the teaching in most subjects. Subject leadership has yet to be consolidated. The assessment of the pupils' performance and progress has improved and realistic targets are set, both for behaviour and for learning. Pupils are involved well in evaluating their progress against individual targets;
 - the quality of teaching has improved significantly. It was very good in six lessons, good in five, satisfactory in three and unsatisfactory in one. Lesson-planning is consistently good and the intended outcomes are clearly stated. In the best lessons, stimulating activities engage the pupils' interest. Questions are used effectively to assess the pupils' learning and guide their thinking. Praise is used well to acknowledge and encourage good work and behaviour;
 - there is a strong partnership between teachers and teaching assistants which ensures that the pupils are appropriately supported. The flexible use of staffing is beneficial in providing for the needs of both individuals and groups;
 - the quality of education provided by the school's behaviour intervention service has improved significantly. The service is led and managed very well. Its procedures are rigorous. The service provides a good range of support for
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staff and pupils in local mainstream schools and promotes re-integration effectively;

- the school is improving its good links with local schools in order to promote the appropriate referral of pupils and their effective inclusion;
- the newly appointed headteacher is a very good leader and manager, who has built on the effective work of the previous acting headteacher, whose tenacious and enthusiastic approach dramatically improved the quality of education. The headteacher is establishing a cohesive and committed staff team and has produced a good development plan for the next three years. She is supported well by efficient and effective senior managers;
- the governing body actively supports the school. It fulfils its responsibilities and holds the school to account effectively. The chair of governors provides committed and thoughtful leadership;
- the local education authority (LEA) has provided good support. LEA personnel have worked regularly with staff to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Support for subject management has been effective in some areas, especially in ICT.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- continue to improve the quality of teaching;
- continue to raise standards of attainment, particularly in English, mathematics and ICT.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Standards are slowly rising. The pupils' work is scrutinised and National Curriculum levels of attainment are ascribed systematically and with rigour. Some pupils produce work of reasonable quality and there is good work in literacy and in mathematics. The results of the national tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2004 were better than the previous year. Of the five pupils who took the tests, two achieved the expected Level 4 in English and four achieved Level 4 or above in mathematics and science. Two pupils achieved the higher Level 5 in science and one did so in mathematics. The better behaviour of the pupils and the teachers' good management skills are contributing to a rise in standards.

8. Standards in English and mathematics remain low. Too many pupils have limited skills in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. However, better assessment of the pupils' individual needs has helped the teachers set an accurate baseline and make suitable plans. Better teaching helps most pupils to make good progress in these subjects. The school has identified the pupils who require additional support and very good individual programmes are planned and taught by the literacy support teacher. As a result, some pupils have made substantial improvements in reading and spelling.

9. The pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Some are making good advances in developing their speaking and listening skills, and very good progress in reading. The pupils' writing has improved, but is still weak for those who are reluctant to try. The pupils are encouraged to write frequently and their skills are improving, although what is written is limited in content. In very good lessons, the pupils are keen to write and try their best. Teachers in Key Stage 2 are successfully implementing strategies to improve the pupils' writing, such as helping them to rehearse their ideas before writing them down. The teachers help reluctant writers to achieve success in lessons where the pace is brisk, appropriate topics are chosen, they read aloud dramatically and show the pupils how to organise their writing. Many pupils find writing and spelling difficult but have made good progress. Handwriting is weak but is improving.

10. The pupils' mathematical skills are developing well and the pupils apply them accurately in increasingly complex contexts. Their understanding and application of the four rules and their understanding of time are growing. Pupils in Year 3 tell the time on the hour and half-hour and are learning to identify quarter to and quarter past the hour. By Year 6, most pupils successfully complete multiplication problems using hundreds, tens and units.

11. In science, the pupils have good practical skills and positive attitudes towards the subject. They use scientific vocabulary appropriately and are progressing at a good pace. In Key Stage 1, the pupils made good progress in understanding how circuits work and demonstrated how crocodile clips are used with batteries to complete circuits. In a Year 6 lesson, a pupil engaged well in a practical activity on gravity, through which he learned that objects of different mass fall to the ground at the same rate.

12. ICT is taught as a separate subject and there are good plans for its further development. The co-ordinator has the skills to lead the subject effectively. All classrooms have computers and in many lessons ICT was used well to support learning. The pupils use software to help improve their reading and spelling. They have a reasonable understanding of the applications of ICT, use a good range of functions and are well motivated to learn new skills. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, the pupils made very good progress when using computer programs and programmable 'turtles'. Some good examples of word processing were seen in Years 5 and 6.

The pupils attitudes, values and personal development

13. The school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. The pupils' pastoral needs are identified and met well; staff work very skilfully to promote their personal and social development. The staff treat the pupils with respect and care. The school has a comprehensive curriculum for pastoral care. It is taught in religious education lessons, assemblies and social skills sessions such as breakfast time. Breakfast times welcomed the pupils warmly and provided an enjoyable and valuable nurturing experience for them, setting a positive tone. The staff made the most of opportunities to remind pupils of their daily targets.

14. An assembly, led by the headteacher, was effective in helping the pupils think about the needs of others; the pupils were encouraged to collect items to send to children who live in poverty. Throughout the day, the staff teach appropriate social skills and take opportunities to reinforce expectations and encourage co-operation.

15. The school has a positive ethos and is a friendly, safe and well-ordered community. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. The respect and care which the staff have for pupils is exemplary and the pupils respond very well. The staff are committed to the school's values and work hard to promote the pupils' progress and well-being. The learning environment is attractive, well decorated and well maintained. Attractive displays included pupils' work and records of their experiences.

16. There has been a marked improvement in the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Most have good or very good attitudes towards their work and are proud of their achievements. Generally, they behave well in lessons and, during breaks, are respectful to staff and move sensibly around the school. A significant minority of pupils experience particular personal stress, often as a result of circumstances beyond the school's control. Any incidents are managed with care and sensitivity. The pupils enjoy the activities organised at break times. Lunch was a pleasant social experience. The staff talked with the pupils about their interests.

17. The attendance and punctuality of the pupils has improved; the school staff and the welfare service work well together to promote and encourage attendance. The school's registration procedures are good and no time is lost in investigating absence. At around 92 per cent, attendance levels are below the national median and unauthorised absence is higher than average. The LEA's attendance advisory officers are rigorous in obtaining accurate information about the attendance of those pupils who spend part of their week at Waterside and part in mainstream school. The school's analysis of absence has improved and further analysis is being carried out by the LEA.

18. Communication with parents and carers is improving and the school works well with them. The home/school liaison officer is in regular contact with the parents and carers and keeps careful records. Parents appreciate the way they and their children are valued and treated by all staff. There are regular communications from the headteacher, and several teachers use home/school notebooks to communicate good news and concerns to parents and enable them to record how their child has behaved at home.

The quality of education

19. The school provides an effective curriculum, which includes the National Curriculum. Suitable policies and schemes of work underpin the teaching in most subjects. Subject leadership has yet to be consolidated. The assessment of the pupils' performance and progress has improved and realistic targets are set, both for behaviour and for learning. Pupils are involved well in evaluating their progress against individual targets.

20. There are sound medium-term plans for all subjects and cross-curricular links are developing well. The music therapist supports the school well in teaching music. The ICT co-ordinator has completed a hardware audit and has identified needs. A syllabus for ICT has been developed and the LEA's adviser has taught demonstration lessons. The action plan for the development of ICT is being implemented. Computers are being used effectively in some lessons. There are suitable plans to purchase resources to support physical education. There are improved schemes of work for the teaching of social skills.

21. The school's policy for assessment, recording and reporting contains useful guidance for teachers. In the better lessons, the teachers use these strategies although the practice is not consistent. The teachers record each pupil's progress in all subjects; this is a positive development. Some of the teaching assistants have improved their skills in assessment; for

example, an assistant in a reading lesson kept helpful notes on what the pupils could and could not do. The literacy teacher has assessed the attainment of pupils who have literacy difficulties and, as a result, the teaching is tailored very well to their needs; some pupils have made swift progress. In the better lessons, the teachers are skilled in assessing the pupils' learning and modify their approaches accordingly. Following training, the assistants are improving their skills in assessment.

22. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. It was very good in six lessons, good in five, satisfactory in three and unsatisfactory in one. Lesson-planning is consistently good and the intended outcomes are clearly stated. In the best lessons, stimulating activities engage the pupils' interest. Questions are used effectively to assess the pupils' learning and guide their thinking. The staff use praise effectively to raise the pupils' self-esteem and promote learning and good behaviour; the pupils respond positively. In the best lessons, the pupils are reminded of what they have already achieved and what they are expected to learn. Resources are used more effectively. Artefacts, visual aids and videotapes stimulate the pupils' interest. ICT is used well in some lessons to enhance learning and motivate the pupils.

23. There is a strong partnership between teachers and teaching assistants which ensures that the pupils are appropriately supported. The teaching assistants know the pupils well and provide good support. A minority of the assistants do too much for the pupils and give answers rather than using questions to probe their understanding.

24. The quality of education provided by the school's behaviour intervention service has improved significantly. The service is led and managed very well by the deputy headteacher. She has a clear understanding of the impact of the action taken and of the next steps needed for further improvement. The service's procedures are rigorous. The referral system has improved. The teachers and assistants have clear roles and responsibilities and the impact of the support that they offer is evaluated effectively. The teachers in the service are deployed well according to their strengths. They undertake additional responsibilities and work as a cohesive team with a sense of direction. The schemes of work continue to be developed and refined. The quality of teaching is often good or very good.

25. The school is improving its good links with local schools in order to promote the appropriate referral of pupils and their effective inclusion. The behaviour intervention service is very effective in this respect. There is an effective exchange of teachers and assistants between Waterside and mainstream schools; this promotes professional development and supports inclusion well.

Leadership and management

26. The newly appointed headteacher is a very good leader and manager, who has built on the good work of the previous acting headteacher, whose tenacious and enthusiastic approach dramatically improved the quality of education. The headteacher is establishing a cohesive and committed staff team and has produced a good development plan for the next three years. There are effective policies and procedures and the staff team works well together. Communication systems are good.

27. The headteacher is ably supported by an efficient and effective senior management team. The deputy headteacher is particularly effective in both curriculum and pastoral matters. The acting deputy headteacher has good leadership and management skills.

28. The governing body actively supports the school. It fulfils its responsibilities and holds the school to account effectively. The chair of governors provides committed and thoughtful leadership. She has established effective professional relationships with the headteacher and the LEA. Meetings and committees have well focused agendas. The school's budget is managed well.

29. The LEA has provided good support to the school. LEA personnel have worked regularly with staff to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Support for subject management has been effective in some areas, especially in ICT. The LEA's attached inspector has given good support and has been closely involved with all developments. She has monitored the quality of teaching rigorously and has supported improvements in teaching and learning. In addition, two advanced skills teachers have worked with the school and there has been good support from the attendance advisory service. The educational psychology service has worked well to steer the development of effective social skills work.

Implementation of the action plan

30. The inspection report of May 2003 required the school to address six key issues. These related to: improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils at Key Stage 2; strengthening the leadership and management, including the Behaviour Intervention Service; reviewing the curriculum, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects; improving assessment; and together with the LEA, improving systems for recording exclusions and attendance. There has been good progress in addressing all of these key issues.

31. The teachers have worked hard and acted on advice and on the comments they have received following lesson observations. Planning is more detailed and rigorous. The quality of teaching is much improved as a result, and is good or very good in most of the lessons.

32. The curriculum has been revised to begin to make links between subjects, in line with national recommendations, and schemes of work have been improved. The school provides a balanced curriculum, and a wider range of resources is being used to good effect. The school continues to implement its assessment policy effectively, using the assessment information to set individual targets for the pupils and to plan suitable lessons which are matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils. The pupils' targets are regularly monitored and reviewed.

33. Progress on improving leadership and management has been very good. The school has an effective headteacher and deputy headteachers, responsibilities have been reviewed and reallocated, and staff are carrying out their subject management roles although subject management for literacy needs to be reviewed. The governors fulfil their responsibilities and have provided continuity and good support during a critical time for the school.

34. The systems for recording exclusions and attendance are more robust and data on the patterns of weekly attendance of the pupils is more accurate.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in May 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to provide an acceptable standard of education. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in December 2003, March 2004 and June 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of May 2003.

In December 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Fifteen lessons or parts of lessons were inspected. Four of the lessons were taught by the behaviour intervention service in other local schools. In addition, one assembly and two registration and breakfast sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair of the governing body, the LEA's assigned inspector, a parent and the educational psychologist attached to the school; informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of May 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.