



Inspection report

Sebright Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 100240
LEA Hackney

Inspection number 273556
Inspection dates 9 and 10 February 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs G I Oldham Additional Inspector

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.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Audrey Street
School category	Community		Goldsmiths Row
Age range of pupils	3 to 11 years		Hackney
			London
			E2 8QH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7739 6531
Number on roll	418	Fax number	020 7613 0789
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr D Harvey
Date of previous inspection	September 2003	Headteacher	Mr K Howdle

Age group
3 to 11 years

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Introduction

When Sebright Primary School was inspected in September 2003 it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in February 2005.

Description of the school

Sebright Primary School is an inner city school, situated in the south of the London Borough of Hackney. It is larger than average, with 368 full-time pupils, including 22 who attend the specialist language resource unit. Fifty part-time pupils attend the nursery. The school serves an area that is economically disadvantaged and ethnically mixed. Forty four per cent of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. Fifty four per cent of the pupils speak English as an additional language, which is very high. The proportion at the early stages of learning English has increased over recent years. Twenty five per cent of the pupils, including those who attend the language unit, have been identified as having special educational needs, which is above the average. Nine pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The attainment of pupils on entry is below average.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

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 rate of improvement at Sebright Primary School accelerated rapidly following the appointment of the headteacher in January 2004. His tenacious leadership, the hard work of the staff and more effective recruitment and retention of teachers, mean that the school is now providing a sound education for its pupils. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is very good and the pupils achieve well. Standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 are below national expectations and below what they should be, but they are rising as a result of teaching that is at least satisfactory and often good, very good or excellent. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved significantly over the last year and are mostly good or very good. Attendance remains well below the average for primary schools. The curriculum meets national requirements and the pupils benefit from an increasing range of additional activities, including clubs and workshops. The school has responded well to the high quality support it has received from the local education authority (LEA).

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of September 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with the quality of teaching, leadership and management, and assessment. There has been good progress in relation to all the key issues.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is good. The headteacher has high expectations for raising standards and improving the quality of the teaching and learning, and communicates this vision highly effectively to the staff, the pupils, and the parents. He receives very good support from the senior staff and the governors in taking the work forward. A comprehensive programme for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance is used well to gauge the rate of progress and shape the way subsequent work is planned.

What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However the key priorities are to:

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

Achievement and standards

In the Foundation Stage, the pupils in the nursery make a very good start particularly in relation to their personal, social and emotional development and their attainment in communication, language and literacy. The continuity in the curriculum of the nursery and reception classes is good, and by the end of the Foundation Stage, some pupils reach standards that are beyond those expected for five-year-olds; for example, in aspects of reading and mathematics. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the school's national test results for the last three years have for the most part remained well below the national figures. However, some improvements are evident, particularly in Key Stage 1. When the 2004 results at this key stage were compared with those of schools with a similar intake, they were broadly average in reading, and well above the average in writing and mathematics. The 2004 results at Key Stage 2 did not show the same level of improvement and remained below or well below those of similar schools. Much of the underachievement of the oldest pupils is attributable to weaknesses in past provision. In lessons, standards are rising, the rate of progress is increasing and more pupils are achieving the levels expected for their age. However, these improvements are inconsistent across the classes and subjects and this is a direct result of the variations in the quality of teaching.

The school is aware that standards remain too low and has implemented a range of effective strategies to raise attainment. The grouping by ability of the Year 6 pupils for English and mathematics, for example, has enabled them to be taught in smaller classes by very experienced teachers, and for the gaps in their learning to be systematically addressed.

Personal development

The school has a positive ethos and relationships at all levels are very good. The staff adopt a consistent approach to managing the pupils' behaviour and this has a strong impact on the way the pupils relate to each other and to adults.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are mostly good or very good and they respond well to the improved teaching and the greater demands that are made of them. Most pupils are keen to learn and work well with others in pairs and groups. Since the beginning of this school year, specialist staff have provided a well-planned support programme for some pupils who have behavioural difficulties. The impact of this work has been very positive and the pupils' attitudes to learning have developed well.

Punctuality has improved significantly over the last term as a result of the work of key staff and the rewards and sanctions systems that have been introduced. Despite the implementation of rigorous procedures to improve attendance and follow up the reasons for pupils' absence, the attendance rate remains well below the national figure for primary schools.

The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory with some good features. The rich cultural diversity of the pupils and the staff is celebrated and reflected in aspects of the curriculum and work on display. The assemblies are used well to reinforce the concept of the school as a community and to develop the pupils' understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. Most of the pupils work and play well together. They understand right from wrong and are aware of each others' needs; for example, the school council plays an active role in developing and implementing various initiatives.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was good overall, and was strongest in the Foundation Stage and in Year 6. In two thirds of the lessons, the teaching was good, very good or excellent. The overall profile of the teaching has improved significantly when compared with 2003. This is because of the appointment of some experienced teachers who hold key management positions, greater stability in the work force, and a rigorous programme of monitoring and support that was introduced by the head teacher immediately after his appointment to the school in January 2004.

In the best lessons, the planning was detailed, work built well on what the pupils already knew, and the teachers had high expectations about what the pupils should achieve. Probing and challenging questions were used well to gauge the pupils' understanding and to increase the pace of the lessons. The tasks captured the pupils' interest and the organisation of the classes often allowed them to work with others to share ideas. The teaching assistants made an important contribution in many of the lessons. They worked well alongside the teachers and gave effective, well-targeted help to specific groups of pupils. Occasionally, the work did not provide enough challenge for the most able pupils and the marking did not give enough guidance to the pupils about how to improve their work.

The curriculum is appropriately balanced, and based on national requirements. Proper emphasis is given to developing the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy and planned work helps the pupils to develop and reinforce these skills across a range of subjects. The breadth of the curriculum has improved. It reflects more fully the pupils' needs, and a variety of clubs, visits, and visitors to the school are used successfully to enrich their experiences. The school has strengthened the planning at all levels and continues to monitor and evaluate the quality closely. The provision for special educational needs and the support for pupils learning English as an additional language are good; these aspects are well led by knowledgeable co-ordinators.

A reliable assessment database has been developed which records clearly the pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics, and more recently science. The information from this tracking is analysed carefully and then acted on; for example, to determine the impact of the work of individual teachers on their pupils' learning, and to identify which pupils need additional support. The teachers' understanding and use of the assessment data have improved and planning reflects more accurately the needs of the

different ability groups. In the last year, the school has been involved in a national initiative, the Intensifying Support Programme. As part of this work, improvements have been made to the way the pupils' targets have been developed and the way they are used to help them to understand what they need to do to move forward.

The school pays due attention to the pupils' safety, health and general well being. There is greater consistency in the way policies are implemented and all the staff take responsibility for the actions of the pupils. A range of equipment is provided for the pupils' use at play and lunchtimes and the distribution of fruit to the younger age group during the break period encourages healthy eating habits.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good. His drive, enthusiasm, and high expectations have been critical to the school's improvement. He communicates his principles and ideas very clearly and is successfully developing a leadership team of senior staff to take the work forward. The headteacher is very well supported by an effective assistant headteacher whose management and teaching skills set a very good role model for others to follow. More recently, the impact of the work of the deputy headteacher has improved, particularly in the way the systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress have been developed. Alongside the senior leadership team, the establishment of a senior management team has proved effective by enabling a number of key staff to lead aspects of the school's work. Appropriate training is being given to these middle managers to help them to develop their roles and skills.

Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are systematically organised and implemented rigorously. The outcomes are used well by the senior staff to chart the progress being made; for example, in improving the quality of teaching, and to inform the way subsequent work is planned.

Governance is good and the chair of governors provides strong leadership. He has a clear understanding of the strengths in the school's work and the areas that need to be improved and with other governors, he has worked well with the headteacher and senior staff to keep the school's progress in implementing the action plan under close review.

The school has benefited from the well-focused support that has been provided by the LEA. This work, effectively co-ordinated by the link adviser, has had a positive impact; for example, strengthening aspects of the teaching, curriculum planning, and the work of the subject leaders. The LEA's plans to support the school in the future are well considered and build appropriately on the range of work already done.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Sebright Primary School was inspected in September 2003 by HMI 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. 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 give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in March, June and November 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of September 2003.

In February 2005, two HMI and an Additional Inspector returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Thirty two lessons, five registration sessions and two assemblies were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership and management teams, the chair of governors, a representative from the LEA, and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was 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 September 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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