

Benthal Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100260
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	276278
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2006
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Kimbell Ms Sarah Thompson (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Benthal Road London N16 7AU
Telephone number	020 8985 6701
Fax number	020 8985 8526

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2006
Inspection number	276278

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Benthall is an average size junior school. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds with Black African, Caribbean, Indian and White British being the largest groups. Nearly two-thirds of the pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Since September 2005, the school has been led by an acting headteacher. Benthall Junior will amalgamate with the adjoining infant school in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade:

What the school should do to improve further

- Encourage pupils to use their initiative in organising and presenting their own work by placing less reliance on worksheets.

Achievement and standards

Grade:

Personal development and well-being

Grade:

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade:

Teaching and learning are good overall with some outstanding elements. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and plan lessons effectively. Expectations of behaviour and learning are generally high and pupils' respond well to these. Teachers use questioning effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and check their understanding. Tasks are mostly matched to pupils' abilities and needs so they are suitably challenged and this helps them to become productive learners.

Learning assistants are briefed fully and provide effective support particularly to pupils with learning difficulties. Individual educational plans are used well to guide pupils' learning. Pupils with English as an additional language receive good support in developing their language skills. As a result of this support, all pupils have full access to activities and progress well. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss work in pairs and this extends their speaking and listening skills effectively. Investigative skills are taught extremely well. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, pupils applied observation and analysing skills well when comparing and matching different powders from a fictional crime scene. Visiting specialist teachers of music, environmental science and literacy enhance the school's good teaching and contribute well to pupils learning and enjoyment. Despite the numerous strengths in the teaching, there are some shortcomings. On occasions, there is an over-reliance on worksheets. This hampers pupils in organising and presenting their own work. Also, the expectations, pace and challenge are not as high in a Year 4 class and this slows pupils' rate of learning.

Assessment is good because the data is used well to plan teaching and to set challenging learning targets for pupils. The marking of pupils' work is generally good as it identifies why a piece of work is good and provides guidance on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade:

The school's curriculum is good. It is stimulating, well planned and enables all groups of pupils to achieve well and contributes significantly to their good personal development. There are good additional programmes for literacy and numeracy to help pupils who need them. The strong emphasis on problem solving and investigative work in mathematics and science leads

to outstanding achievement in these areas. The computer suite is being used effectively to develop pupils' ICT skills. Exciting initiatives to challenge gifted and talented pupils have been introduced. For example, a small group of mixed aged pupils explored the characters and the play script of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'. They expressed their ideas and views articulately. Important areas such as promoting healthy lifestyles and personal safety receive good attention. The lack of easy access to grass areas and to swimming facilities sometimes limits the range of physical education (PE) activities.

A good range of extra-curricular activities and interesting visits enriches the curriculum. The performing arts is a strong feature of the curriculum with productions such as 'The Little Match Girl' and 'Bugsy Malone' presented this year. Pupils' displayed art work in the style of Matisse, Lowery and Klee is of a high quality. However, the external fabric of the building is shabby and does not reflect the vibrant work within the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade:

Pupils are provided with good care, guidance and support. Within a positive and welcoming atmosphere, pupils feel safe and know that there is always someone they can go to if they have problems. Child protection and health and safety procedures are robust and ensure pupils' safety. Bullying is rare and is handled swiftly and effectively. Academic support and guidance are good. There are clear systems to track pupils' progress. Recently introduced target setting is helping pupils to see how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve. Good relationships with the adjoining infant school help to ensure that pupils settle quickly into the juniors. Parents feel confident that this is a caring and supportive school. As one parent wrote, 'The school's ethos is very child-centered and makes children feel secure. This enables them to develop educationally.'

Leadership and management

Grade:

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found out. Benthall Junior is a good school and one you can be proud of.

These things were particularly pleasing: * You clearly enjoy school and the activities offered. * Teaching is good and learning support assistants help you. * You are all making good progress. Your progress is particularly good in mathematics and science. * Your artwork and performances in productions are impressive. * Your behaviour is good and you are friendly and polite. * You get on well with other pupils and adults. * Your headteacher leads the school very well. She receives good support from the deputy headteacher and other staff. * Your parents are pleased with the school and give it good support. * There is a good range of clubs and visits, which you clearly enjoy.

There is one important thing that we think could be improved: * Sometimes your teachers could encourage you to plan and organise your own work rather than providing you with worksheets. Finally, thank you once again for all your help. We wish you all the best for the future.

With kind regards

Derek Watts and Jane Chesterfield

Inspection Team