



Timbercroft Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 130922
Local Authority Greenwich
Inspection number 282148
Inspection dates 3–4 October 2006
Reporting inspector Wendy Simmons

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Timbercroft Lane
School category	Community		Plumstead
Age range of pupils	3–11		London SE18 2SG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8854 6915
Number on roll (school)	380	Fax number	020 8855 0904
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs J Ashby
		Headteacher	Ms J Stephenson
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2000		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	3–4 October 2006	282148

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Timbercroft is a large and ethnically diverse school in which 22 different languages are spoken. A high proportion of pupils speak English in addition to their home language. The largest groups include pupils from White British, Asian Indian, Black British Caribbean and African backgrounds. Deprivation is greater than found in most schools. More pupils than usual have learning difficulties and disabilities. Since the last inspection the school has had a number of staffing difficulties and worked through a major re-building project. Recently, the school gained the 'Inclusion Charter Mark,' 'Travel Plan' status and is now working to achieve the 'Healthy Schools' award. The school has been part of the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Timbercroft is a satisfactory and improving school with several good features. Pupils are well cared for and soon become confident and happy at school. In the words of one parent, 'I can see the effort and care of staff for the welfare of the children.' Since the last inspection standards have risen from well below average to average by the end of Year 6. This reflects the drive of the headteacher to improve the school and successful teamwork. However, standards by the end of Year 2, especially in writing, have not risen fast enough and are well below average.

In the last few years there have been significant staffing difficulties. As a result there were weaknesses in teaching that accounts for the slower progress made by some pupils in earlier years. This has now been resolved and teaching and learning are now satisfactory, with some good lessons. Consequently, pupils achieve satisfactorily. Provision is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage, with children making steady progress from their low starting points. Satisfactory progress continues through to Year 6. Where teaching is good, assessment information is used well to plan lessons for the range of abilities within classes, but this is not consistent enough to help pupils to make greater progress.

Leaders and managers place a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and well-being and consequently they are good. From the Foundation Stage through to Year 6, they gain in confidence, learn to work well with others and increase their self-esteem. Pupils are helped to overcome complex emotional difficulties. These are important features of the school's work that help to prepare pupils satisfactorily for their future lives. Parents agree that their children are happy at school. Pupils behave well showing respect for each other and relationships between adults and pupils are good. Strong links with the community, many visits and an interesting curriculum are important factors in why pupils enjoy school.

The school's evaluation of standards, pupils' achievement and learning, is only partially accurate. The school has been better at evaluating its academic performance by Year 6 but, has not broken this down enough to reflect what happens by the end of the Year 2. The school's improvement plan correctly recognises that literacy attainment, especially in writing is an important priority for development but it does not give enough indication about the precise targets for improvement in standards by Year 2, especially for the most able learners. However, the headteacher works well with her staff and they are determined to develop the school for the benefit of the pupils. The school has a clear capacity to improve as evident in the improvements since the last inspection in the quality of teamwork, rising standards by the end of Year 6 and the improvements to the Foundation Stage accommodation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve evaluation of learning, standards and achievement, so that leaders have a more accurate view of the school as a whole.
- Raise standards by the end of Year 2, especially in writing.

- Make better use of assessment information, especially in planning activities for the most able learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils reach average standards by Year 6, although they do slightly better in mathematics and science than in English. The school meets its target for getting pupils to an average Level 4, but the target for higher Level 5 is not reached. Standards began to rise in 2004 with the school being in the top 100 most improved schools in the country in 2005. The school has focused much of its attention on improving results by Year 6 and has just started to focus attention on standards lower down in the school. Hence, in Years 1 and 2, standards in reading and writing remain significantly low, especially so in writing.

Children start in the Foundation Stage with much lower skills and knowledge than is usually expected, especially as many have complex emotional and social and learning needs or are new to learning English. Overall, achievement is satisfactory as pupils move through the school. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress, particularly those involved in the 'Talking Partners' project. Those with complex learning difficulties make good progress due to good support and early help. However, the most able pupils do not always make the progress they should. The school also accurately identified that some boys from Black backgrounds did not do as well as they should. Clear action is taking place in the school to improve younger pupils' progress. For example, focused group work in Years 1 and 2 is taking place to widen pupils' phonic skills in order to help them with their writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, behave well and become confident learners. Attendance, although below average, is improving due to the school's strong efforts. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. Pupils learn respect and gain a positive self-image. Through the 'Anansi' project the aspirations of ten boys of Black African and Caribbean heritages were lifted by working with a professional black financier. Pupils' understanding about healthy lifestyles and regular involvement in sport boosts their fitness, self-esteem, confidence and teamwork skills. From the Foundation Stage upwards, children learn how to cooperate well with one another. They say that clubs and visits, 'help us to enjoy learning'. Pupils especially like the work of the learning mentors who help them to think about and overcome personal problems. Most know how to take greater responsibility for their own safety and participate in a wide range of community activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and some lessons seen were good. Teachers and pupils have good relationships which help to create a good working environment in classrooms. Pupils behave well, although they are noisy when the work is uninteresting and is not demanding enough. Those pupils who find learning more difficult are often well supported and make good progress given their complex difficulties. Lessons have a clear focus and there is strong emphasis on the development of pupils' basic skills enabling most pupils to make satisfactory progress. However, teachers' expectations about the amount and difficulty of the work pupils can do are not always high enough, particularly for higher attaining pupils. On some occasions, it is because higher attaining pupils are given the same work to do as average pupils. This is because teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to help them plan pupils' learning. In the good lessons seen, teachers planned very well for all abilities. Teachers' marking is thorough and shows pupils how they can make their work better. However, pupils do not always have the time to respond to these comments to ensure that they further improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with several good features. There is a clear focus on literacy, numeracy and science. Standards in reading have improved because of the changes to the way in which reading time is managed, but writing opportunities remain inadequate, especially for the most able pupils in Year 2. The 'Challenge to Succeed Project' is an exciting provision for black boys and is helping to raise their achievement. The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils, although it is not as strong in meeting the needs of higher-attaining pupils. Many pupils in Year 1 are very immature and still need more Foundation Stage experiences, which the school is trying to address. The school has strong links with outside agencies to support work with pupils who have learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties, as a result they make good progress. The recent refurbishment of the computer suite gives pupils the opportunity to apply and extend their skills well. The curriculum is enriched with very interesting visits and clubs which add to pupils' enjoyment and broadens their personal experiences. Music and sport enable pupils to experience exciting new skills, especially by working with specialists.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, especially pastoral care, support and guidance are good. One parent commented, 'I have never felt worried at work because I know my daughter is in a caring, safe and secure environment'. Child protection procedures are rigorous. Pupils

benefit from the significant support of the local community and growing links with parents. Assessment procedures are developing well and the academic guidance given to pupils is good. Older pupils know their targets for improvement although younger pupils are not always sure about what they need to do to improve their work. New assessment procedures are now in place in the Foundation Stage and these are being used to plan the learning more consistently for different ability groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not their first language are well supported. Bereaved children receive excellent support including the delightful remembrance corner in the school garden where they can be quiet with their thoughts.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher works well with the deputy and share a clear vision to improve the school. Staff have good relationships with parents and pupils and seek their views on how to improve the school.

The school's improvement plan focuses broadly on the areas needed to develop the school and staff have already begun work on this. They have been most successful in improving standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 6 due to extra support for pupils and training for teachers. Lessons and teachers' planning are monitored regularly by senior staff but this monitoring is focused more on teaching than on pupils' learning and, as a result, managers' self-evaluation is not always accurate. The school judged teaching and learning to be good where as inspectors judged these features to be satisfactory. This difference is a result of limited evaluation of learning. Evaluation of standards lacks rigour for pupils' performance by Year 2.

Governors support the school satisfactorily and are keenly developing their role. They know the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's decision to introduce a breakfast club has improved pupils' punctuality and attendance.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

You may remember that three inspectors came to your school recently to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for being so friendly and telling us about your school. I am writing to let you know what we found out. Our main finding is that Timbercroft Primary is a satisfactory school and is improving.

You are well cared for by the adults at your school and they work especially hard to help you to develop good social skills, such as working with, and respecting others. Well done for behaving so well and keep this up! Teaching and learning are satisfactory and some lessons are good. This means that many of you get to the standards that we expect by Year 6. Your teachers help you to make steady progress. We especially like the way your teachers encourage you to take part in sporting activities and work with your local community. You enjoy coming to school and value the visits out. We were very interested to hear about the exciting trip to Swanage.

Your school was one of the top, most-improved schools in the country in 2005, which shows you how your headteacher and all of the staff are keen to make your school even better. These are the things that we have asked them to work on.

- Make sure that they have a clear understanding of how well the school is doing.
- Help pupils to get their work up to a higher standard by Year 2, especially in writing.
- Plan more challenging activities for those of you who find learning easy.

Please remind your mums and dads about helping you to attend regularly. Well done for your efforts in improving this so far, especially those of you who have gained the 100% attendance award certificate.

Yours sincerely

Wendy SimmonsLead inspector