



Unicorn Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134061
Local Authority Bromley
Inspection number 282437
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Keith Williams

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Creswell Drive
School category	Community		Beckenham
Age range of pupils	4–7		BR3 3AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8658 0282
Number on roll (school)	110	Fax number	020 8658 6948
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Jef Foulger
		Headteacher	Mrs Sue Robertson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 4–7	Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006	Inspection number 282437
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school opened in September 2003 to Reception-age children. The school is rapidly expanding and is over-subscribed. Pupils, the oldest of whom are now in Year 3, are drawn from a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. The large majority are of White British heritage and none is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion eligible for free school meals is much smaller than usually found. The school has Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Unicorn Primary provides a good standard of education. The headteacher, staff and governors, have risen to the challenge of establishing a new school in which all pupils are valued and able to make good progress. The school takes excellent care of its pupils and their personal development is given a high priority. Consequently, pupils are very happy and enthusiastic learners, enjoy all that the school offers, and their behaviour is exemplary. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. One commented, 'These are very lucky children' and another said, 'I couldn't be happier.'

Children make a good start in Reception because of good teaching and provision. Most are on track to reach the goals expected of them. When they first start school, children's attainment is below that typically found, particularly in language and creative development. Taking account of their starting points, they achieve well to reach average standards by the time they reach Year 1.

This good progress continues in Years 1 to 3 because pupils are well taught and eager to learn. As a result of intensive work to improve pupils' reading skills, standards are now above average and pupils make very good progress. The success of this work is also seen in the results of those pupils in who took part in the 2006 national tests in Year 2, the first group at the school to do so. The starting points for these pupils were lower than those of other year groups. Whilst it is not yet possible to make national comparisons, the results for reading represent a good level of achievement. In writing and mathematics, where results were lower, achievement was satisfactory. The school is working determinedly to raise standards amongst this cohort. Indeed, good teaching means that their rate of progress is increasing and most pupils are on track to meet, or exceed, their challenging targets in reading and mathematics. Appropriate strategies are being used to secure improvement in writing and mathematics, but the school recognises that there is still more to do.

The school keeps a very close check on pupils' all-round development. Care is of the highest quality and pupils receive excellent support whatever their ability. Procedures to secure the health, safety and welfare of pupils are robust. As a result, pupils report that they feel very safe and find the staff very approachable. There are very good systems to track pupils' academic progress. The information gathered is used very well to plan appropriate work and ensure that pupils know how they can improve. The school provides an exciting curriculum that contributes to pupils' high levels of enjoyment. Excellent links are made between subjects to make the learning more meaningful.

Senior staff and governors evaluate the school's performance rigorously. All staff have high expectations of themselves, and their pupils. They know what is working well and what needs to improve. Many staff are new to leadership. Their roles are developing well and subjects are well managed, but the school rightly recognises the need to increase their influence on teaching and learning in their subjects. The challenge of providing for pupils currently at the school, while planning for those who will arrive as the school grows, has been met very well. Given the progress made since the school

first opened and the accurate, if modest, self-evaluation, there is very good capacity to secure further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics, particularly amongst pupils currently in Year 3.
- Increase the influence of subject co-ordinators on teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils respond well to good teaching, make good progress and achieve well. Standards are average and are rising. For example, pupils achieve very well in reading and standards are now above average. The 2006 national test results represented a good level of achievement for those pupils in reading and a good proportion reached the higher Level 3. The school's careful analysis of these results, and their own assessments, highlighted the need to raise standards in writing and mathematics, particularly amongst pupils in Year 3. The proportion of these pupils reaching Level 3 in writing and mathematics, while broadly similar to that found nationally in recent years, was lower than that in reading. Work to deal with this is already having a positive impact and the rate of progress made by pupils, including the higher attainers, is increasing. There is still more to do, however. For example, the school has rightly identified, and is tackling, a weakness in some pupils' ability to write at length. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls. Those pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They are very proud of their school. Relationships amongst pupils and with the adults in school are very positive, and pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Consequently, they enjoy school, make good progress and levels of attendance are good. Pupils feel safe in the school's supportive environment. They enjoy the healthy food offered at lunchtime and understand the benefits of exercise during break-times and regular 'fitness sessions'. Pupils contribute to the smooth running of the school and show a good level of involvement in the wider community. Their views are sought on a range of issues but, at present, there are few formal ways for them to have a voice. This has been recognised by the school and plans are in hand to establish a school council. Pupils make good progress in their basic skills and are well prepared for the future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, and this ensures that pupils make good progress. Teachers keep a close check on pupils' understanding during lessons. Questioning is brisk and challenging and any misconceptions are quickly dealt with. Consequently pupils gain confidence and make good gains in their learning. This is a strong feature in all classes and was seen to particularly good effect in an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 3. Lessons are interesting and enjoyable, and the work planned meets pupils' individual needs. This means that those who need extra help or harder work get it. Support staff make a significant contribution to the progress made by pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult. Pupils appreciate the help they get. Good quality marking means that pupils of all abilities have a clear understanding of how they can improve. Pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in assessing their own work and there are appropriate plans to improve this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is supplemented by a good range of enrichment and out-of-school activities. An increased emphasis on hearing pupils read and changes to the way that reading skills are taught have contributed to the rising standards. Excellent links are made between subjects through a 'topic' approach that makes the work interesting and relevant. Pupils have a good recall of the work they have covered and speak enthusiastically about their favourite parts. Visits to places of interest add to the pupils' enjoyment. Pupils also benefit from the skills of a good range of visitors, some of whom are parents or governors. Staff work hard to ensure that planning and the necessary resources are ready for each year group as the school grows. Pupils' learning is supported by the excellent building, and they particularly enjoy the stunning grounds. The school provides well for pupils' personal development, but recognises that it needs to place the planning of these activities on a more formal footing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides excellent care, guidance and welfare for its pupils. As one parent offered, 'I feel very at ease sending my daughter every day knowing that she is getting the best possible care.' Pupils appreciate this, too, and report that they would not hesitate to approach an adult if they were worried. A very close check is kept on pupils' all-round development. Regular assessments of pupils' academic progress mean that teachers have a good understanding of how well their pupils are doing. This information is very well used to guide pupils in the next steps in their learning. A very close check is kept on the welfare of all pupils, including those identified as being vulnerable and those with learning difficulties or disabilities. The very high standard of care is a

significant factor in pupils' enjoyment of school, their sense of well-being and the progress they make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has forged a highly effective team with the new deputy headteacher, other senior staff and governors. Together, they keep a very close check on the school's performance and have a clear idea of what is working well and what needs to improve. This has been instrumental in ensuring that standards continue to rise. Finances are well managed. Throughout the school there is a strong sense of teamwork amongst teachers and support staff and this contributes to pupils' good progress and well-being. Subject co-ordinators organise their subjects well. However, many staff are new to leadership roles and their role in monitoring checking on teaching and learning in their subjects is not yet fully established.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed me to your school when I visited recently. I am writing to tell what I found out. I enjoyed watching you in lessons. You are very proud of your school and many of you took time to speak to me. You gave me lots of helpful information. A special thank you to those of you who met with me and showed me your work.

Although your school is still very new, you, your headteacher and all of the other adults have made it a good school. You told me how good you think your teachers are, and I agree. They make lessons interesting and take excellent care of you so that you are able to learn new things and stay safe. You do your bit too, because you enjoy school so much. You are very keen to do your best, and your behaviour is excellent. Your school building is super and I know how much you enjoy playing in your fantastic playground. It's the first time I have seen dinosaurs and an African hut in a school!

I am very pleased to see that your hard work in reading has paid off and you are now doing so well. I can see that you are improving in writing and mathematics, too. Your teachers want these to get even better and I am sure you will help them. In particular, I want those of you in Year 3 to keep working hard so that your writing and mathematics keep improving. Your teachers work hard, too, and they have lots of things to do after they have marked your work and planned your next lessons. They each have more than one subject to look after. They do a good job in making sure that your class has all the equipment you need and has lots of new things to learn. Your headteacher wants them to keep a closer check on how well you are learning in their subjects and I agree that it is important that they do this.

Once again, thank you for your help during the inspection. I enjoyed being in your school and I wish you good luck for the future.

Keith Williams Lead Inspector