

Sebright School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100240
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	285751
Inspection dates	7–8 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Hugh Protherough

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Harvey
Headteacher	Mr K Howdle
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Audrey Street Goldsmiths Row London E2 8QH
Telephone number	020 7739 6531
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large, inner-city primary school serves a diverse and mobile community. Pupils come from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds and two thirds are at an early stage of speaking English. The range of first languages is very wide. The area is economically disadvantaged to a significant degree, as evidenced by the high proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. A fifth of pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is above average, and for those with statements of special educational needs (SEN) is high. A significant number of pupils start or leave the school at times other than the beginning and end of the school year, often to take extended holidays in their parents' country of origin. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and has very recently been granted the Arts Mark Gold Award. The school has devised its own set of quality benchmarks across many aspects of its work. These are known by all those at the school as 'the Sebright standard(s).'

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sebright is a good school that is increasingly effective in serving the needs and aspirations of its diverse community. In the two years since the school was removed from special measures the pace of improvement has continued unrelentingly. The reason for this lies in the successful way that the headteacher communicates his vision for the Sebright community, so that everyone is involved and committed to moving the school forward. The work of the senior leadership team epitomises the school's core values and ensures that key aspects of its work are successfully delivered. Staffing has stabilised. A programme of well considered succession planning means that opportunities abound for those teachers who wish to develop their skills as middle managers and leaders.

The 'Every Child Matters' agenda clearly underpins the school's excellent arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the pupils. These have had a major effect in improving the confidence and self-esteem of many children. Those who spoke with inspectors are highly enthusiastic about their school and greatly enjoy attending it. They are adamant that despite occasional arguments, 'Sebright is a bully-free zone.' This appears to be borne out by the views of parents and carers. Almost 200 parent questionnaires were returned. None mention bullying and all agree that their children enjoy school. Pupils speak knowledgeably about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. More importantly, increasing numbers can be seen applying this knowledge in the choices they make for their own life-style. The school does an excellent job in promoting equality of opportunity so that all groups of pupils make good progress. Improved assessment tracking means that pupils know what they are aiming for and are effectively supported towards achieving their targets as a result of the good team work of the staff.

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good and particularly successful in helping children settle swiftly into the world of school and early learning. The appointment of a senior teacher to lead and manage both Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 has resulted in far greater consistency of approach to the teaching and assessment of pupils' progress. As a result, the proportion of children achieving the goals expected of five-year-olds, though small, is increasing. The current progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is good. Though standards at Year 6 are below the national average, they are rising and pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well.

The influence of school leadership can also be seen in the current improvements to the school's curriculum where strengths in the creative arts spur further the pupils' appetite for learning. The use of specialist teachers in physical education, arts and music are having a positive impact on pupils' work in these areas both in and out of school. However, the current deployment of the school's computers within a dedicated suite restricts the extent to which pupils are able to harness the power of information and communications technology (ICT) in other subjects.

The school's good capacity to improve still further is evidenced by the self-critical approach of the leadership team. Their accurate evaluation of the school's performance recognises the journey they have travelled together and identifies the right priorities for the future. Inspectors agree that currently teaching and learning are good. However, in order to raise standards further, Sebright children need an even greater proportion of teaching that is at least good and even more that is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching so that an even greater amount is good or outstanding.
- Increase pupils' use of new technologies to support their learning in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The profile of the skills and abilities of the children entering the nursery is low. The vast majority are at a very early stage in developing social and language skills. The increasingly effective induction arrangements allied to skilled and imaginative teaching ensures that the children make a good start in the Nursery that is effectively built on in the Reception classes. By the age of five a small, but increasing minority of children have reached the goals expected of five-year-olds. The remainder have made good progress from their different starting points. Whereas previous inconsistencies in the quality of provision in Years 1 and 2 led to a downturn in results, effective management has turned things around. This year's assessments of seven year olds show a much greater proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels and a small, but significant number exceeding them.

Standards at Year 6 have improved steadily over the past two years. National data show that standards in 2006 were below the national average and suggest pupils' made satisfactory progress since taking their tests as seven-year-olds. The inspectors' analysis of the current Year 6 work shows that pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are achieving well. Although there is a long tail of lower attaining pupils, including some with significant special educational needs, their needs are well catered for and they are making good progress towards their targets. The same is true for the few higher attaining pupils who have been successfully supported in achieving the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics. Good quality work in physical education, art, history and music reflects the pupils' enjoyment of school and their positive responsive to opportunities to shine across the curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. The pupils' enjoyment of school is palpable. It is reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning that have contributed so much to the recent improvement in their achievements. A particular strength is the pupils' enthusiasm for the wider curriculum and their developing capacity to reflect on their learning. Most pupils are proud of their school. Many play an active part in helping to deliver the Sebright standards by making the most of opportunities such as becoming school councillors or acting as peer mediators. Others make their contribution by representing the school in sporting challenges or contribution to cultural events and exhibitions. Although academic standards are below average, they are improving and the successful way that the school develops the confidence and inner-belief of so many pupils means that the majority is well prepared to face the challenges of the next stage of education.

The attendance of a minority of pupils continues to give cause for concern. However, it is clear that the continuing efforts of the school leadership team to bring home to parents and carers the disadvantages of lengthy trips abroad are having an impact. Attendance has risen steadily to satisfactory levels.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The strength of teaching lies in the extremely positive relationships between adults and pupils achieved through the consistent application of the school's behaviour policy. Teachers recognise and reward positive attitudes and deal constructively with the few pupils who occasionally struggle to live up to the expected standard. The work of the learning mentors is particularly effective in supporting these processes. As a result of improved assessment and good quality marking the teachers know their pupils well. They make good use of this information to ensure that tasks are well matched to the wide range of abilities within each class.

The leadership team successfully deploys staff flexibly to support learning across the school. In the Nursery the three adults work very effectively as a team supporting and extending learning through lively and imaginative activities. The two Reception classes also share expertise to good effect and are particularly good at developing pupils' spoken language. Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to supporting the successful integration of pupils with LDD and SEN in order that they make the necessary progress towards their targets. Pupils who speak English as a second language also make good progress in their learning, often as a result of the effective work of teaching assistants who offer bi-lingual support.

The school has successfully eliminated inadequate teaching, but there remains a small proportion that is only satisfactory. In these lessons there are good features but teachers sometimes talk for too long or do not offer the sorts of exciting group activities seen in the many good lessons. As a result the pace of learning slackens.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good curriculum that motivates pupils of all backgrounds and abilities to work hard and do their best. The creative arts are increasingly influential in pupils' learning, whether through their impact on speaking and listening in drama, or in helping pupils to express feelings and emotions in art and music. A strong commitment to meeting pupils' physical needs is reflected in the good work of an adult trainer dedicated to the teaching of physical education (PE). This ensures all children receive a minimum of two hours PE each week. Pupils' work during Black History week shows a deepening appreciation of the issues around this subject as well as illustrating the school's commitment to developing a curriculum that reflects the diversity of its immediate communities. There are good opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum. Teachers make good use of the interactive white boards. However, current organisation and resources limit the extent to which pupils use their ICT skills to help them learn in other subjects of the curriculum.

The school offers a good range of well attended sporting and cultural activities at lunchtimes as well as at the end of each school day. An interesting variety of visits and visitors similarly enrich the school's curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is too modest in its evaluation of these aspects of its provision. Current arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils are excellent. Many pupils arrive at the school with low levels of skills, both socially and academically. The staff do a first-rate job in supporting the children and improving their personal development and well-being, regardless of whether they arrive in the Nursery, or mid-career. Arrangements to keep pupils safe are strong, especially in relation to child protection and health and safety. The school building raises its own set of complex problems and risk assessments are thorough. The continual reminders to pupils to exercise care for each other through the Sebright standards are effective in ensuring accidents seldom occur. Staff are excellent at identifying and meeting the needs of individual pupils. For instance, those with emotional and behavioural disorders may receive 'anger management' training, whilst the families of pupils with a history of inadequate attendance are successfully targeted to improve. Academic guidance has improved markedly over the past two years. The performance of pupils is tracked assiduously and this information shared so that every child is aware of their targets and how to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The vision and influence of the headteacher are excellent. He has sustained the appetite and desire of the staff to take the school from adequacy towards excellence. This has been achieved through rigorous self-evaluation to which all contribute. The acuity of this work is reflected in the concise school improvement plan that sets out the main headings for action. The meat of the plan is then refined by leaders and managers across the school whose accountabilities are clearly understood by the entire staff team. The impact of this work is most apparent in those areas of established leadership such as arrangements for the care of pupils, assessment and the Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1. Many middle managers are new to their post. They have a good oversight of standards and pupils' achievement, but have been in post for too short a period to have a sustained effect in improving these aspects to higher levels. The governing body has good oversight of the work of the school. Their sub-committees help make the work of governors more manageable as well as offering good opportunities for middle managers to account for their work.

Many parents recognised that the school has come a long way in the past four years. One wrote, 'I wish and pray Sebright continue to be like this till the end of time.' Whilst inspectors doubt that any school can stand still in time, they are confident that the successes of the current staff team offer a good foundation for the future.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	Yes

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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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.

Annex A

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	1
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

20 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sebright School, London, E2 8QH

Many thanks for the friendly welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school early in June. You were polite and helpful throughout the inspection and told us lots of helpful things about why you believe Sebright has become such a good school. We agree with you.

Your teachers take excellent care of you and help you stay safe. They know you well and often plan lessons that are fun. Most of you are working hard. We were particularly pleased to see the way you are doing in improving your work in mathematics and English as well as the interesting things you are doing in art, drama, music and PE. Most of you are doing a really good job in meeting the Sebright standards, especially in your good behaviour and the way you look after each other. It's also good to see that attendance is improving - keep it up!

There are a couple of things we'd like to suggest to make Sebright even better. We want even more of your lessons to be as good as the best so that you make even faster progress. We also want the teachers to find ways of letting you use computers to help your work in other subjects, not just ICT.

Your headteacher and all the staff are working really hard to make Sebright a great place to go to school. We hope you'll continue to make the most of the opportunities they are providing and wish you well for the future.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough Lead inspector