



# Robert Blair Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 100422  
**Local Authority** Islington  
**Inspection number** 285786  
**Inspection dates** 18–19 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Nick Butt

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Brewery Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Islington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		London N7 9QJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7607 4115
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	250	<b>Fax number</b>	020 7607 5395
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Ms Susan Hay
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mark Miller
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 November 2002		

<b>Age group</b> 3–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 18–19 October 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 285786
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average-sized school draws pupils from several estates and is situated in an area of high socio-economic deprivation. More than half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is very high. Two in five pupils have learning difficulties, which is more than double the national average. The school runs a Language and Communication Resource for 28 pupils with statements of special educational need. More than one tenth of pupils have statements, which is five times the national average. Less than a third of pupils are of White British heritage. There are some 35 minority ethnic groups represented among the school community, the largest of which is Bengali. Almost one half of pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has awards for the quality of its artwork and promoting healthy lifestyles. Two arts organisations are based in the school. There are also children's centre extended services.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This improving school provides a satisfactory level of education. Pupils make satisfactory progress from very low starting points. Standards are rising because of the close tracking of pupils' performance, and timely support to ensure that they do not fall behind. The school's caring ethos and inclusive approach ensure that all pupils are valued and thrive socially and emotionally. Standards are low, but improving in English and science. Presentation of work and handwriting are untidy. Standards in mathematics are too low, but it is too soon for the impact of recent initiatives to be seen in test results. Pupils have difficulty in retaining their knowledge and in using and applying it in different situations. Marking is good in English, but offers little guidance in mathematics. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with elements that are good or better. Teachers and teaching assistants work very hard to interest pupils and to involve them in their learning. However, in some classes the work does not always meet the needs of the pupils, so that at these times their progress is too slow.

The school is strongly committed to a creative curriculum and provides a high level of enrichment. Pupils work with many artists and authors, who help them to enjoy their education and boost their self-confidence. One child recalled taking part in some drama about Victorian times and said, 'it helps you learn, because you can tell how they felt when you act it out'. The research projects pupils undertake contribute well to their enjoyment of school and to their good personal development and well being, as they develop skills of teamwork and independence. This helps to prepare them for their future education. The school has not done a full audit to ensure that its creative curriculum meets statutory requirements in all subjects.

The school has recently undergone major remodelling to create children's centre services and to enlarge and update classrooms. It now provides a modern and attractive learning environment for pupils, with strong links with families and the local community. Pupils enjoy healthy lifestyles at school with plenty of opportunities to take regular exercise (not counting all the stairs they have to go up and down each day!). The Foundation Stage is well run and gives children a good start to their school careers. The Language and Communication Resource (LCR) is well managed, supports pupils well and they are well integrated into classes when appropriate.

The governing body holds leaders to account well. The new chair has revitalised its work and there is a strong focus on raising standards and achievement. The school has been through a period of change and has emerged stronger, with good systems in place to monitor its work, and a totally committed staff. There have been encouraging improvements in standards and achievement in the past year, and the good personal development of pupils and the good care they receive, means the school's capacity to improve is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

\* Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that pupils apply their knowledge and understanding in different situations, through marking that helps them to improve.\*

Raise standards in English and science and improve the presentation of work and the quality of handwriting.\* Improve teaching so that more of it is good by consistently matching work to meet the needs of all pupils.\* Ensure that the school's creative curriculum meets statutory requirements in all subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards are exceptionally low, particularly in mathematics. Achievement is satisfactory because pupils make sound progress from very low starting points. They generally meet their targets. The very high proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs means test results are lower than they would otherwise have been. The school does not make excuses, however, and is clearly focused on improvement. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because of the good teaching they receive and an exciting and stimulating curriculum. Nonetheless, they rarely meet the early learning goals expected of them when they enter Year 1. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain low at the end of Year 2. The many pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. At the end of Year 6, standards are well below average in English and very low in mathematics and science. In the 2006 national tests standards improved significantly in English and science. The reason standards are so low in mathematics is because pupils have great difficulty applying their knowledge and understanding in different situations, such as in the tests themselves.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are happy in a calm and friendly atmosphere. Attendance has improved from being very low to broadly average, reflecting pupils' increasing enjoyment of learning. Although pupils come from diverse backgrounds, there are strong relationships throughout the school based on tolerance and respect. They are proud of their school and have positive attitudes to learning. One pupil said, 'I like everything about the school because teachers put their heart into it'. The vast majority of pupils behave well. They do not think that bullying is an issue. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They know how to keep safe and are confident to ask for help if they feel unhappy. They value the opportunities to take responsibility, such as being 'playground buddies'. They know that their views are valued, such as when discussing school uniform and improvements to the playground. They contribute to the wider community when raising money for charities or participating in local environment projects. Basic skills are low but improving to help them make the most of their future education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Very good relationships between adults and pupils mean that lessons are enjoyable and pupils are keen to take part. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils used tape measures to estimate and find out the length of parts of their bodies. A very clear explanation from the teacher meant they could get on purposefully and cooperate well together. Teachers share with the pupils what they want them to learn, showing them how they will know this has been successful. One pupil summed it up in this way: 'I like the learning - they tell us a lot. They help us a lot. They make it fun'. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently strong, with imaginative tasks and incisive assessment of children's learning. The pupils with statements of educational need are well supported and take an active part in lessons both in the LCR and in mainstream classes.

However, in some classes the work planned is not suited to the needs of all pupils, so that some struggle to make progress and others find it too easy. In these classes teachers are less confident about maintaining a good pace, and sometimes talk for too long. Marking encourages pupils, but sometimes praise is too liberally used. In English books pupils are given good guidance about how to improve, but this is not consistently the case with marking in mathematics.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It contributes to pupils' enjoyment of learning and enables them to develop good personal and social skills. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage provides pupils with a range of interesting and fun activities and enables them to make good progress. The school is very committed to the development of a creative curriculum in order to improve pupils' enthusiasm, self-esteem and confidence so that they want to learn more effectively. Links are being made between subjects, but the school has not yet ensured that it takes account of the statutory requirements in all subject areas. A wide range of clubs and visitors make learning more interesting and enable pupils to have the opportunity to work with a variety of artists, musicians, writers and dancers. The school offers residential trips, such as to France and Somerset, to enrich the curriculum and to provide opportunities for children to make choices and take part in activities which interest them.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All pupils are treated individually and know they are valued. One child said, 'the staff help you a lot - they understand you'. A strength is the work done to remove the barriers to learning that exist for a great many children, through the thoughtful use of a wide range of support groups. This includes art therapy and working with a Learning Mentor. Pupils who work in the LCR receive good support

in their learning. The school makes good use of outside agencies to support children and their families. Child protection procedures and arrangements to ensure health and safety are well established and result in pupils feeling safe. Pupils' progress is tracked closely. Pupils are clear about their personal academic targets and what they need to do to achieve them. One pupil commented, 'the teachers sort out a level that is right for you or a little bit higher'. Only in the marking of mathematics is guidance less helpful.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy head give the school good direction and have a strong vision for its future development. Teaching has improved as a result of successful action to eliminate inadequate teaching, and to model good practice. A regular and rigorous planned programme of self-review ensures that judgements are accurate, so that leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Plans for school development are well focused on raising standards and provide a valuable tool for future improvement. Governance is good, with a fresh impetus provided by the new chair. Governors ask challenging questions and are very clear about raising achievement. The chair said that when making spending decisions they always ask the question, 'what is this doing for the progress of children?' One such decision was for the deputy head not to be class based, so that she could monitor more closely and model good teaching. Several members of the leadership team are new appointments and the full impact of their effective work on standards and achievement has yet to show, although in the Foundation Stage provision has improved greatly.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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	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**

We enjoyed visiting your school, even though we kept getting lost on all those stairs! Your school is improving and gives you a satisfactory education. You are looked after well. We know this because you told us how safe you feel at school, and how much you appreciate the support you receive from adults, who understand you. Your behaviour is good and you get on well together. You have many clubs to enjoy, and you are often working with artists and doing exciting things, such as your residential visits. This means you enjoy school a lot and like coming. Since the building work has been finished, you have bigger classrooms and more modern spaces to work in.

At the moment standards are low, and we believe they can improve more. This is especially true of mathematics. We know you find it difficult to remember what you have learnt sometimes, so that you can use your knowledge when you need to, for example in a test. We have asked your teachers to give you lots of opportunities to practise what you learn in different ways. Your handwriting is also rather untidy, and we think your work could be neater. So we hope you will take more care over how you set your work out, because you clearly enjoy your lessons and are keen to learn. Your teachers work very hard to make lessons interesting and fun, but sometimes we believe the work isn't quite right for you, either because it is too easy or too hard. So we have asked them to make sure it is at just the right level for you. You do lots of exciting things in your research projects. We want the teachers to be sure that you cover all the work you are supposed to, and nothing gets forgotten.

Thank you once again for being so friendly and making us so welcome. We think your school has a great future, and we wish you all the best in your studies.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. N. Butt, Lead Inspector.