

Friars Primary Foundation School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100855
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	285901
Inspection date	3 July 2007
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 category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss H Wines
Headteacher	Mr N Hodgess
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002
School address	Webber Street London SE1 0RF
Telephone number	020 7207 1807
Fax number	020 7401 6588

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This over-subscribed, average sized primary school serves an area containing significant deprivation, where an above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being those of Black African, White British and Bangladeshi heritage. Over half of the pupils have a home language other than English, although few are at an early stage of learning the language. An above average proportion of pupils have been identified with learning difficulties or disabilities, or are in receipt of a statement of special educational needs. The school has the Investors in People award. Since September 2006, it has been led by an interim headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Friars is a good school and has some outstanding features. The school takes exceptional care of its pupils and, as a result, they make excellent progress in their personal development and achieve well academically. Most pupils enjoy everything the school offers immensely, including the very good range of activities provided outside lessons. They work hard and, by the end of Year 6, attain above average standards.

The interim headteacher leads the school well and is well supported by a strong leadership team, staff and governing body. They are building well on the successes achieved under the previous leadership and have good capacity to continue this process. The leaders evaluate the school's work thoroughly and have a very accurate view of its effectiveness. They work determinedly to tackle areas identified as needing improvement. Most parents are very supportive, one reporting that she is 'proud that my daughter attends this school,' while others note, 'We have been extremely impressed with all aspects of Friars'.

Pupils' attainment when they first join the school covers a wide range but, taken overall, it is below average. In addition, many have limited understanding of English. One of the school's significant successes is the way it provides high quality support to enable pupils to meet a number of challenges with which they are faced. Consequently, pupils who are potentially vulnerable, those learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties achieve well. The strong emphasis on developing each individual pupil, but as a member of the school 'family,' means that they make outstanding progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They contribute very strongly to the school and wider community and have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The youngest children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage because they are well taught by staff who have a good understanding of how young children learn. They place a strong emphasis on promoting children's language and social development, so that they make good progress and achieve well, although standards are below those expected at the end of Reception. Good teaching means that pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 to 6. The rate of progress accelerates in Year 6, because of highly effective teaching, and these pupils achieve very well to reach above average standards.

Teachers and support staff work together well to meet pupils' wide ranging needs by using a combination of individual, group work and whole class teaching. A close check is kept on pupils' progress. Staff have focused recently on increasing the challenge provided to more able pupils, and a measure of their success is the good proportion of Year 6 pupils who have exceeded their targets to reach the higher Level 5 this year. Whilst more able pupils achieve well, the school recognises that there is still more to do, particularly to increase the proportion of Year 2 pupils reaching the higher Level 3. Teaching is rarely less than good and is often outstanding, but there are inconsistencies in the way that pupils' work is marked that limit the feedback they get on their progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the challenge for more able pupils to enable more of them to reach the higher levels.
- Ensure that marking more consistently gives pupils sufficient feedback on how well they are doing and how they can improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from their starting points to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. They achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development and their physical and creative development so that, in these areas, almost all reach the goals expected at the end of Reception. Progress in other areas is good, too, although a lower proportion, about three-quarters, reach the expected goals. Standards are average at Year 2. They have risen since 2004, when the results of the national assessments for these pupils were exceptionally low. Although pupils of all abilities achieve well, the school has rightly identified the need to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3. The work to improve this has not yet had sufficient time to have its full impact. Pupils' rate of progress accelerates in Year 6 and the national test results for these pupils have been significantly above average in recent years. This represents a very good rate of progress since they were assessed in Year 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Outstanding personal development underpins pupils' academic achievement and prepares them very well to be future citizens. Many pupils are faced with significant social challenges and the school does everything it can to enable them to behave well, fulfil their potential and play a full part in school life. Consequently, behaviour is good overall. Most pupils behave very well and this ensures that lessons run smoothly and calmly. Occasionally, a very few pupils present challenging behaviour, but this is managed well by staff, so that it very rarely affects the progress of other pupils. Most pupils enjoy school very much and appreciate teachers' efforts to make lessons interesting and fun, although more able pupils report that they sometimes feel they could tackle harder work. The school works hard to promote good attendance and, as a result, the rate is rising and levels are now in line with the national picture. Pupils are very proud of their school council, particularly because they 'have to make big decisions and be a role model'. They make a considerable contribution to school life, for example, by interviewing candidates for the school's headship. Significant strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils have a very well developed understanding of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves, both locally and in the wider world. Good progress in the basic skills means that they are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' all-round development. Lessons are well organised and, typically, the pupils' widely differing needs are well met. Extra support is provided for those in greatest need, which enables them to achieve well. More able pupils are increasingly challenged by harder work, although the school recognises that there is more still to do. A close check is kept on pupils' progress, but occasional lapses in marking mean that pupils are not always clear about what they should do to improve. Relationships amongst pupils and with staff are very good, so that teachers can concentrate

on teaching and pupils on learning. Support staff make a strong contribution to lessons and those opportunities when they work with individuals or groups outside classrooms. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage helps the youngest children to do well in a calm, supportive environment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum and a very good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Staff work hard to review and improve what is offered. Planning for literacy and numeracy is very thorough. A revised approach to teaching pupils about letter sounds has captured pupils' enthusiasm and is helping to raise standards. Planning for gifted and talented pupils is good and offers many opportunities for them to use and develop their expertise outside school, for example in the science challenge. The school is currently reviewing and improving the way that computers and other technology are used in other subjects. Outside lessons, pupils appreciate, and benefit greatly, from an exciting range of clubs, visits and visitors. There is a very strong emphasis on promoting the arts and sport. Links with local theatres and galleries are used very well to enhance pupils learning and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school places a very high priority on ensuring that pupils, whatever their background, ability or gender, are able to play a full part in school life and fulfil their potential. As one parent reported, 'The staff are friendly, supportive and professional. They always put the child's needs first. 'You can approach them at any time to discuss your child, which I truly value.' A very careful check is kept on vulnerable pupils and those potentially at risk. High quality support for pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties or disabilities ensures that they achieve well. The school makes excellent use of a wide range of support services to support these pupils. All the necessary steps are taken to secure pupils' health, safety and welfare. The tracking of pupils' academic progress is thorough and is used very well to identify potential underachievement and set targets for pupils' improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The interim headteacher, senior staff and governors form a strong team who are firmly focused on raising standards and providing high quality pastoral care to pupils. As a result, the school is highly inclusive and all pupils are valued. Staff share the commitment to school improvement and leadership at all levels is good. Subject coordinators lead their subjects well, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Very strong leadership in the Foundation Stage, for pupils learning English as an additional language and for those with learning difficulties contributes to the school's success. The monitoring of teaching and learning is very good and, together with a very careful analysis of test results and other assessments, means that the leaders know their school very well. Governors contribute well to this. Although some of their activities for gathering information about how the school is doing are new, they are already helping them to hold the leaders to account.

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Annex A

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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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	1
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

10 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Friars Primary Foundation School, London, SE1 0RF

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed me during your school's recent inspection. I am writing to tell you about what I found out. Many of you spoke to me during the day and I was pleased to be able to meet some of you to find out your views and talk about your work. What you told me was very helpful.

Lots of you, and your parents, told me that you feel you are doing well and that your school is good. I agree. I could see in lessons and in your books that you are making good progress. By the time you reach Year 6, your work is better than I often find. You told me that your teachers make learning fun and I could see this for myself. I was very pleased to see how hard you try. Your teachers and the other adults make sure that those of you who are new to English, and those who find work difficult, get the help that you need. Some of you who are good at work told me that you enjoy the work, but could sometimes do harder work. Your teachers have been working hard to make sure that you get this harder work, and I agree with them that they need to keep working at this. I have also asked your teachers to make sure that your work is marked up to date and gives you enough information to help you improve. Please make sure that you read their comments carefully, because they will help you to improve.

Many of you told me that you feel safe in school and your headteacher and staff do everything they can to look after you. You behaved really well during my visit. Well done. Congratulations to the school council. You are right to be proud, because you make a real difference. I know that other children are pleased with the things they can play with at break times.

Even though your school is good, your headteacher, staff and governors want to make it even better. I am sure you will want to help them by continuing to work hard and behave well, and I wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Williams Lead inspector