

Ben Jonson Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100890
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	285909
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Pritiben Patel

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Relph
Headteacher	Ms Suki Sharples
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001
School address	Harford Street Mile End London E1 4PZ
Telephone number	020 7790 4110
Fax number	020 7790 7701

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ben Jonson is a large primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of Bangladeshi or Somali background all of whom speak English as an additional language. Around one in four are at the early stages of learning English. The school serves an area of considerable economic and social deprivation and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils who either leave or join the school at other than the usual times is above average. The school has achieved the Investors in People Award, Healthy Schools Award and Silver Artsmark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ben Jonson is a satisfactory and improving school with some good aspects. Following the last inspection, the school went through a period of decline and there have been inconsistencies in pupils' progress in different subjects. One of the key reasons for this was the senior management team's shift in focus from pupils' achievements to managing the school's new building programme. Evidence since the move into the new building shows an improvement in pupils' progress. The school has also recognised that pupils' achievement must improve in order to raise standards and have begun to take effective action. For example, work on improving approaches to teaching reading has helped to lift standards in English by the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory overall. This demonstrates that the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and strengthening. Staff at all levels are committed to improvement. The local authority has helped the school to analyse weaknesses and implement strategies to improve achievement, which are bearing fruit. For example as well as improved standards in English, pupils are now making satisfactory progress in mathematics due to a strong focus on mental strategies and the application of skills to problems. Governors have a secure understanding of the schools strengths and weakness and play a satisfactory role in its development.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are below average and make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory provision. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school although standards remain below average overall by the end of Year 2 and 6. Although pupils are now doing better in English by the time they leave the school, they are not doing well enough in reading and writing in Key Stage 1. Despite pupils' better progress, standards are not high enough in mathematics. Standards in science remain well below average because not all teachers feel confident in their subject knowledge. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education because of their satisfactory achievement in basic skills allied to their positive attitudes to learning.

Staff and governors place a strong emphasis on the care, guidance and support provided for pupils and, consequently, they are well looked after and their personal development is good. A governor explained, 'This is an inclusive school' and inspectors agree because all pupils take an active part in all its activities. Pupils enjoy their education, feel safe, make a good contribution to the school and have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Effective support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language, allowing them to make as much progress as their peers. The school has a good range of links with external agencies in order to meet individual needs.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall although there are examples of good and sometimes outstanding practice. Teachers generally manage their classes well and have good relationships with pupils. More able pupils sometimes find the work set too easy and are not sufficiently challenged in all lessons. There are also inconsistencies in marking and pupils are not always clear about the next steps for improvement. The curriculum provides satisfactorily for the development of pupils' basic skills and offers a wide range of clubs and activities that bring enjoyment to pupils learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in reading and writing by the end of Key Stage 1 and in mathematics and science at the end of both key stages.
- Ensure that all teachers provide sufficient challenge for more able pupils so that they achieve as well as they can.
- Improve teachers' marking so that pupils are clear about the next steps for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage children make good progress in some areas of learning such as communication, language and literacy as well as creative and personal development because of the strong emphasis placed on them. However, their progress is satisfactory overall and standards are below average by the end of the Foundation Stage.

Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are below average overall except in science where they are well below average. Pupils do not achieve well enough in this subject because some teachers lack confidence and pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their investigative skills. Although pupils' progress in mathematics is improving it is inconsistent in various year groups and standards are below average. Whilst standards reached by Year 6 pupils are average in English, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 in reading and writing has fallen in the past two years. Not enough pupils reach the higher levels in English, mathematics or science because they are not also challenged sufficiently. Pupils with learning difficulties and those new to English make satisfactory progress in line with other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy their time in school and their attendance has increased significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their behaviour is good and they have good relationships with one another. As one pupil said, 'This is an outstanding school because everyone gets along with each other'. Pupils learn how to live a healthy lifestyle and this has influenced their food choices. They also have a good understanding of the role that exercise plays in keeping healthy. Pupils talk confidently about the ways they keep themselves from harm and explain that they feel safe in school. Pupils contribute well to the school and community through taking on responsibilities such as the school council as well as raising money for charity and working with parents on various projects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and mostly manage their classes well. They often use partner talk effectively to promote language development as well as providing pupils with the opportunity to consolidate their thinking. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge but their knowledge and skills in teaching science are not yet well developed. Consequently pupils do not make enough progress in the subject. Marking is sometimes helpful to pupils but with too much variation in its regularity

and quality. Consequently, pupils are not always told about the steps they need to take in order to improve the quality of their work. Teachers know the different abilities of pupils in their classes well, but do not always challenge more able pupils sufficiently. Consequently, work is sometimes too easy for them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. Good links are made between subjects in order to provide pupils with opportunities to use and apply their skills in different contexts. Extra curricular provision is strong and pupils participate in a diverse range of clubs such as French, cricket and sewing. The school's Silver Artsmark award has helped to ensure the arts are an important aspect of the curriculum and has a positive impact on pupils' personal development and enjoyment. The curriculum has been adapted to meet the cultural needs of pupils through Bengali dance, visits to places of worship and choice of text books. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are developed satisfactorily in different subjects. For example inspectors saw interesting history work about famous people that pupils presented using various computer programmes. Pupils' basic skills are being developed satisfactorily in English and mathematics. Progress and standards in science are well below the national average partly because they are not provided with enough opportunities to take part in investigative and experimental work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, guidance and support for pupils. It uses assessment information well to identify and address individual needs, so that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those new to English make similar progress to that of other pupils. Staff put the best interests of pupils first in all that they do and the school works well with parents and other organisations to meet their needs. However, not all pupils are aware of their individual curricular targets and how to achieve them. The work of learning mentors is especially effective in the support of vulnerable pupils and has helped to raise attendance levels. The school ensures that pupils learn in a safe environment by conducting regular site inspections and risk assessments of school activities as well as ensuring that procedures for safeguarding learners are robust.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers at all levels work effectively together, share the same vision and recognise that standards must rise, particularly in science. The headteacher is working hard to ensure that subject managers new to the school or to their posts develop their roles and accountabilities. There has been instability in the subject leadership of science and this has had a negative impact on both progress and standards. A new leader has been appointed but has not been in post long enough to demonstrate sufficient impact. Other subject leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas. They monitor teaching and learning and provide a clear direction for further improvements. For example, the work of the English and mathematics leaders has had an impact on improving standards and achievement in these subjects. Self evaluation is now satisfactory and improvement

initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact. Challenging and accurate targets are set based on a secure understanding of pupil progress. Governors contribute to the development of the school by visiting classrooms, playing a role in the school's self evaluation as well as providing a satisfactory level of challenge for school leaders.

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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?	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	3

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.

Annex A

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

8 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ben Jonson Primary School, Harford Street, Mile End, London, E1 4PZ

On behalf of the inspectors I would like to thank you very much for being helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at all your work.

You go to a satisfactory and improving school with good features. These are the main things we found:

- You get on well with each other, behave well and have good relationships with your teachers.
- You make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics because you have satisfactory or good teaching in your school.
- You enjoy school because there are interesting clubs and activities for you to take part in.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are safe, happy and well looked after.

The headteacher, governors and staff work hard on your behalf.

We believe that there are things that can be improved further. Firstly we think standards at the end of Year 2 in reading and writing and standards in mathematics and science throughout the school could be better. Secondly, some of you find your work easy so we believe that you should receive harder work to help you to do even better. Finally, we think that some of your teachers in their marking should make clear to you the steps you need to take, to improve your work.

With best wishes for your future success,

Pritiben Patel(Lead inspector)