



Stebon Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100922
Local Authority Tower Hamlets
Inspection number 285923
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Nick Butt

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Burdett Estate
School category	Community		Wallwood Street, Poplar
Age range of pupils	3–11		London E14 7AD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7987 4237
Number on roll (school)	473	Fax number	020 7515 0470
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Claire Vanstone
		Headteacher	Ms Alyson Brewer
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves an inner city estate where there is much social disadvantage and overcrowding. Almost all the pupils are from a Bangladeshi background and speak a form of the Sylheti dialect. Many pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is very high. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than average. The school has won awards for its development of staff and for promoting healthy lifestyles.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with many strengths. The headteacher's outstanding leadership gives a crystal clear vision for the school that is shared by all staff. This has led to a consistent approach in teaching and learning. It has also produced a caring, inclusive ethos that reaches out beyond the pupils of the school to their parents and the wider community. The school's excellent links with outside groups and other professionals mean that it accesses the support it needs for vulnerable pupils. It also enriches pupils' experiences extremely well through projects with theatre groups and other organisations.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make lessons interesting and exciting so that pupils are motivated to learn and enjoy taking part. Consequently, they achieve well. However, at times tasks planned for the most able pupils are not challenging enough, and questioning does not always stretch their learning. Standards are broadly average by the time pupils leave Year 6.

The school has adapted the curriculum well to help pupils to master English quickly. From the moment they enter the Nursery, the emphasis is very much on developing their speech and language skills in English. Classrooms feature many learning aids on their walls to stimulate and support pupils. There are examples of pupils' neat work on display but, in exercise books, handwriting is untidy and presentation is often slapdash. The provision in the Foundation Stage is good, enhanced by the introduction of a phonics scheme, which has been particularly successful in teaching pupils early reading skills.

Pupils very much enjoy coming to school and treat one another with respect. Their good behaviour and the friendly atmosphere are features of the school. Pupils explained how 'Playground buddies make sure the children who have no friends get friends.' A parent commented, 'No one is lonely any more.' Pupils have a good understanding of living a healthy lifestyle and love using the school's own indoor swimming pool. They feel safe and know who to turn to if they have a worry. The school council has had a say in healthy school dinners and in making playtimes more interesting. Pupils leave the school with the basic skills they need and the confidence to move on to secondary school.

The school has made good progress since its last inspection and standards are rising. It is well placed to go from strength to strength under its successful and highly committed leadership team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make teaching more consistent by sharpening the level of challenge for the most able pupils when planning tasks and asking them questions.
- Improve pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work so that they take a real pride in it.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are broadly average. Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below the expected levels, especially in language and communication. They make good progress because of the focus on developing their speech and the many opportunities they have to take part in stimulating and practical activities. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 and 2. New approaches to teaching phonics and writing have led to improved results, with current standards slightly above average by the end of Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, good progress is maintained. The school has noticed that in the autumn term pupils have often dropped back in their learning because they can spend the whole summer holiday not speaking English at all. Despite these difficulties, pupils attain broadly average standards by the time they leave the school. In 2006 there was a drop in standards in mathematics and science and the school put in place measures to reverse this. These have been largely successful, especially in the way teachers explain specialist vocabulary, and the current Year 6 are attaining average standards in these subjects. The school has identified the achievement of some girls as an issue and runs a girls' computer club as well as making sure that girls take a full part in contributing to class discussions.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils, along with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and follow 'golden rules' by treating others as they would like to be treated. They keep healthy through taking plenty of exercise and through their understanding of having a balanced diet. One pupil said, 'When you're not healthy something bad happens to you!' Pupils feel free from bullying and other harassment. They value the anti-bullying boxes they can use to tell adults of anything that is troubling them. Attendance is broadly average but would be even better if it were not for long holidays in Bangladesh. The school does everything it can to encourage parents to send their children to school in term time. Pupils enjoy going on visits, especially a residential trip, and cooperate well on projects such as devising dances. Pupils help in the dining hall and raise money for charity. A group of them have been involved in designing a peace garden with a local arts trust, which is now under construction. They get involved in community events such as the successful Eid party. Links with firms in Docklands introduce them to the world of work and they are suitably prepared for a life of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are enthusiastic and give pupils a desire for learning. They plan lessons well and know what they want pupils to learn. Activities are generally well tailored to pupils' different abilities so that they make good progress. Sometimes, however, they do not take fully into account the need to challenge the most able pupils. Relationships with pupils are good and lessons move at a brisk pace. Teachers explain the learning clearly so that pupils know what is expected. A pupil commented, 'If you don't understand, they go over it'. They check understanding through effective questioning although, at times, the questions do not make enough demands on the most able pupils. In an outstanding lesson, the teacher explored with pupils the methods they had used to solve real-life money problems. They were encouraged to use mathematical vocabulary and to link what they were learning to their prior knowledge. Pupils were very keen to describe their different ways of thinking. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour. However, not enough emphasis is placed on well-formed handwriting or on setting out mathematical exercises properly and pupils take insufficient care with these.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is enriched extremely well by visits and visitors and by after-school clubs. A key strength is the way it is adapted to enable the many pupils who speak English as an additional language to achieve well. Pupils are encouraged to talk together and a good range of visual aids are employed to help them access the curriculum. Pupils have good opportunities to use their literacy skills in other subjects but this is only satisfactory in mathematics. Outside school, pupils' experiences are often limited to the immediate vicinity of the Burdett Estate. By providing outstanding enrichment opportunities for them, the school is developing their aspirations and also enhancing their knowledge and understanding of the wider British culture. One pupil said, 'I love trips - we went to the museum where we learnt about World War Two'. Pupils have worked with the National Theatre on Shakespeare productions, with the English National Ballet on dance, with the West Ham Football Club and visited Canary Wharf and the Docklands developments. Clubs include judo and water-polo and pupils benefit from a residential visit to the Essex countryside. These activities contribute very well to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Through developing an effective team of well trained and experienced teaching assistants, leaders have ensured that the needs of pupils with learning difficulties are met well. There are excellent links

with outside agencies and the school's learning mentor makes a valuable contribution to the support of vulnerable pupils. Relationships are good throughout the school. One pupil commented, 'You can trust the people who are outside at lunchtime. They listen and try to sort things out.' Pupils settle into the Nursery well because of the good induction procedures there and they develop self-confidence and make good progress. All procedures are in place for the safeguarding and protection of pupils. Teachers make good use of data to set targets for pupils. Whilst older pupils are very clear about these, the younger ones are not reminded often enough of what they are. Marking helps pupils to improve their work. Pupils at the early stages of learning English are particularly well supported and fully included in class activities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders are skilful at training and encouraging more junior members of staff to take on increasing responsibilities. This has resulted in an effective team of subject leaders who have a good understanding of the areas they cover and who are beginning to make an impact on raising standards. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, moulding a very large staff of over eighty adults into a successful team. Her emphasis on making the most of pupils' achievement is shared by everyone. There are good systems for tracking pupils' progress so that support is put in place at an early stage for anybody who is struggling. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and its priorities for development because of the effective procedures they have put in place to monitor its performance. This has led to detailed and useful strategic plans. Parents are supportive of the school's work, and have many opportunities to become involved, for example in mathematics workshops. Governors are well informed about the school. They each take an area for improvement from the school improvement plan to follow up with leaders and hold the school to account well.

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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?	1
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	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?	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?	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.

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 very much for making us so welcome at your school. We agree that yours is a good school with many strengths. Here are some of the things we like about it.

- You make good progress in your work and enjoy your lessons.
- Your behaviour is good and you look after one another well.
- The teaching is good and teachers help you to understand what you are learning.
- The school helps those of you who are learning English to master it quickly.
- The school cares for you well and shows you how you can improve your work.
- The school is well led by the headteacher and her leadership team.
- The school works hard to involve your parents and other people in the community.
- The governors do their work well and keep in touch with what is going on.

Most of you have work to do which is just right for you but sometimes the tasks are little bit easy for some of you. It is good that you are keen to answer questions in class. We feel that for some of you, they could be more challenging to make you think even harder. We saw some lovely work on display but we noticed that the work in your books is not always tidy. It is important that you present your work neatly so that you take a real pride in what you are doing.

Thank you again for being so friendly. We enjoyed meeting you and send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Butt, Lead Inspector