

John Burns Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101014
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	285943
Inspection date	13 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nicki Goddard
Headteacher	Ms Maura Keady
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001
School address	Wycliffe Road Lavender Hill London SW11 5QR
Telephone number	020 7228 3857
Fax number	020 7801 0036

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- How well children in the Foundation Stage make progress?
- How well pupils achieve in reading and mathematics?
- How effectively the school promotes the pupils' personal development as well as their academic success?

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, by observing lessons, scrutinising the school's records of pupils' standards and achievement and other documentation, and by discussions with students and staff. Parents' responses to questionnaires also informed judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the school's self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The John Burns School serves a community that is very diverse, socially, economically and culturally. The school is popular with families in the local area and is oversubscribed. A high proportion of pupils are from a wide range of ethnic heritages and many join the school at other than the usual times. A third of the pupils has a home language other than English and a similar proportion is eligible for free school meals. The number with learning difficulties and disabilities is twice that nationally. Attainment on entry to Year 1 is below average in most years when other than nursery pupils also join the school. Just under a half of all children entering the Nursery have little or no use of English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The John Burns School has gone from strength to strength since its last inspection. It is now an outstandingly successful school with pupils' progress similar to that of the top five percent of primary schools nationally. This judgement reflects the school's accurate evaluation of its work to promote 'a love of learning and the pursuit of excellence'. All staff consider it a 'wonderful place to be' and work tirelessly towards fulfilling the school's aim. Pupils and parents are happy to be part of John Burns. A parent wrote, 'We are happy customers,' while a pupil commented, 'Everyone is gentle and nobody is without friends'. The school thoroughly deserves its excellent local reputation.

Standards are well above average and all groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well. Pupils make good progress in all areas of learning to reach average standards by the end of Year 2. Their achievements in writing exceed those in reading and mathematics. This is because of the school's particularly sharp focus on encouraging children's writing. Progress accelerates as pupils move through the school and become ever more confident and independent learners. They are particularly successful in English. Those for whom English is an additional language make rapid gains in fluency. The school excels in supporting the achievement of the many pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

The sustained improvements over six years at John Burns owe much to the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, the dedicated senior team and very committed staff. Outstanding leadership and management have ensured that each staff member has a strong sense of teamwork and is ambitious for the pupils. Teachers and support staff create a lively learning environment in which children can thrive whatever their starting points. A major strength of the school is the very effective coordination of information on pupils' aptitudes, potential attainment and personal needs. This enables staff to set challenging but realistic targets for each pupil. Resources are targeted very carefully to support the progress of individuals and to ensure a fully inclusive ethos. Governors, too, take their responsibilities seriously and play a full part in the school's development. They are assiduous in ensuring that funding is matched well to improvement plans arising from the school's accurate and robust self-evaluation.

At the heart of the school's outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils is the way it involves parent and other external agencies in their nurture. This is central to the school's exceptional success with vulnerable pupils and others with complex needs or emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. As a result, pupils' personal development is outstanding. Each pupil is very well known, particularly to senior staff. The calm atmosphere allows individual pupils the space they need to explore issues and experiences important to them, sometimes through carefully targeted play therapy. Arrangements for pupils' academic guidance are also very effective. Systematic checks on pupils' learning identify rapidly where help is needed. Teaching assistants are assigned thoughtfully to ensure high quality additional support. The school sets great store on maintaining a strong adult presence in classrooms and around the site. Excellent attention to basic skills, together with a strong 'can do' culture, ensures that students prepare very effectively for the next stage of their education. They and their parents are able to approach the transition with confidence because of excellent liaison with partner secondary institutions.

Pupils clearly enjoy school and the overwhelming majority attend very regularly. They are convinced that any absence will rob them of exciting and important opportunities. The school

does its level best to find ways to support good attendance and punctuality for vulnerable pupils and those struggling to settle into new living environments. Governors, too, have well-considered strategies to support families who find regular attendance a challenge. The school council is managed exceptionally efficiently by a Year 6 chairperson. Members from all age groups are enthusiastic about their roles and are convinced they make a difference to others, accurately reflecting their opinions and suggestions. They manage a significant budget carefully and, for example, take responsibility for playground equipment.

Individuals feel very safe in school and are serious about safety at playtimes. Their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is also outstanding. Pupils are keen to celebrate and share each other's cultural and religious traditions. Relationships between children are harmonious and characterised by a marked tolerance and respect for each other and the adults around them. Most try to eat healthily, encouraged by the school's efforts to ensure ready access to fruit, milk, water and nutritious meals. An increasing number cycle to school and take part in out-of-hours sports clubs. Pupils of all ages take on a range of responsibilities. Through the school choir, many are involved in music making for local and London-wide events.

Consistently good and often outstanding teaching and an exceptionally well thought-out and co-ordinated curriculum underpin the pupils' rapid progress and success in learning. The saturation programme in literacy accounts for the pupils' high achievement by the end of school. Classrooms are a hive of purposeful activity. Children benefit greatly from the emphasis teachers place on communicating understanding and on group and paired cooperative learning and assessment activities. In mathematics, for example, even the youngest pupils are confident in using technical language accurately and in explaining their methods and answers. Literacy development is encouraged greatly by pupils' evaluation of their work and by praise for really good efforts. Pupils and parents are delighted with the wide range of clubs and other out-of-hours opportunities. All Year 6 pupils, for example, successfully completed the Grade 1 music course for the clarinet.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision for Nursery and Reception children is excellent. Many children enter the Nursery with low literacy rates and often little knowledge of English. Careful observation and planning for their individual needs ensures these children get off to a very good start. Because of the careful balance of activities directed by teachers and those where children make their own choices, they make rapid progress and gain steadily in fluency in English. Exceptional cooperation between, teachers, support staff and parents ensures that children's all round development is a priority. By the end of the Reception class, most are working securely within the expected goals for learning. Their social and emotional development, attitudes to learning and thinking skills show fast progress but because of their language needs, they develop more slowly in linking sounds and letters. The exciting learning and play areas ensure children thrive on interesting things to do, both indoors and out.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils have the same immersion opportunities in mathematics as in reading and writing.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

9 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Burns Primary School, London, SW11 5QR

Thank you for welcoming me to the John Burns School and for sharing not only your ideas and opinions but also your musical assembly, your lessons and your Christmas lunch. Thank you, particularly to the school council who so ably shared their activities with me. I was especially impressed by your excellent choir and by how well you manage that substantial budget.

You and your parents are rightly proud of John Burns. You all think that it is an excellent school and I agree with you. Your exceptional headteacher, staff and governors want the best for you and are determined that you make as much progress as you can in lessons and in your personal development. Because you enjoy school so much, the vast majority of you attend well, work very hard and make very fast progress, particularly in English.

Staff know you all individually and look after you very well. You also help to look after others, particularly those younger than you. You told me you feel really comfortable in school and that there is always someone to help you if you are distressed. You try to eat healthily and I was impressed by the guidelines you follow for your packed lunches. You are right to want more green vegetables in your otherwise nutritious hot meals. You are confident to express your views but at the same time very ready to listen to others. You understand the importance of helping those outside your community and are ready to support children overseas.

When thinking about how it could be even better, your school is very clear that it would like to provide you with as extensive a programme in mathematics as in literacy.

I am sure you will continue to do your level best to cooperate with your teachers and continue to help support those in need of extra help.

I wish you a very happy future at John Burns.

Sheila Nolan

Lead inspector