

Underhill Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101301
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	286022
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs L Cornelius
Headteacher	Mrs E A Moore
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001
School address	Mays Lane Barnet EN5 2LZ
Telephone number	020 8449 2962
Fax number	020 8441 2234

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and serves a mixed area with pockets of deprivation. Just under half of the pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and 26% of pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than usually found and has risen considerably since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties is above average but the percentage with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school is an 'Investor in People' and has achieved 'National Healthy Schools Status', Artsmark Silver and Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Underhill Infant is a good school with some outstanding elements and parents overwhelmingly agree. One wrote, 'I am very happy with the school and am confident that my son is learning an enormous amount there.' The headteacher and her team are enthusiastic and committed to improving provision in their school. They have clearly identified what still needs to be done to bring about improvement because school self-evaluation is accurate. All the issues from the previous inspection have been tackled well and some, such as improving the curriculum, have come on in leaps and bounds. In the light of this, there is good capacity to improve still further.

The school has dealt well with a rapidly changing intake whilst maintaining standards. By the end of Year 2, standards are below average but pupils achieve well considering their starting points. They get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage because teaching is consistently good whilst care and support are excellent. The curriculum is flexible and children are encouraged to explore their own learning, make choices and work both independently and co-operatively. Progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2. However, the school is aware that standards should be higher to fully overcome pupils' weak starting points. Staff are working hard to improve speaking and listening skills so that pupils are able to make improvements to their writing and develop the skills to solve problems more effectively in mathematics.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. This is the result of the excellent care, guidance and support they receive in school and the highly creative curriculum, which invites them to participate fully in all aspects of school life. Pupils behave well both in and out of lessons. They show care and consideration for each other and really involve themselves well in the life of the school. There is a wide range of additional learning opportunities and clubs, such as the ECO club where pupils have grown their own flowers and vegetables and explored environmental issues. These are an undoubted strength and fully support pupils' enjoyment and sense of well being.

Teachers are diligent in making sure that the work they plan is well matched to pupils' needs. They make excellent use of electronic whiteboards to help enliven learning. Teachers give up their own time willingly to run a huge variety of clubs both lunchtime and after school. This contributes towards an outstanding curriculum which enhances pupils' learning. Assessment, and its use in tracking pupils' progress, although rigorous, is still completed by hand. This results in an overload of paper which is sometimes difficult to access. The school already has plans to move to an electronic system to rectify this.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics.
- Implement the planned move to electronic systems for tracking pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start school their standards are generally well below those expected for their age, especially in language, literacy, and mathematical and social development. In a significant number of cases, pupils enter the school with an exceptionally low level of skills. The school gives appropriate emphasis to developing children's language skills in the Foundation Stage through the well planned opportunities they have to talk with adults and each other about

their stimulating and creative daily activities. As a result, many children make good progress, although very few reach the expected early learning goals by the end of their time in the Foundation Stage. This good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. Although standards by the end of Year 2 are still below average, pupils do well considering their low starting points and achievement overall is good. Higher attaining pupils achieve particularly well because the school makes sure that work provided in lessons is challenging and makes them think.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is the result of a focused emphasis within the curriculum, the excellent relationships and the high level of care and support given to pupils on a daily basis.

Pupils have a clear understanding of other cultures and what is right and wrong. They are respectful to each other and to adults and their behaviour is good. Pupils fully understand the importance of being fit and healthy and many are keen to take part in the excellent range of sporting clubs on offer. Attendance is good and has recently improved as a result of school strategies to encourage parental support. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident to turn to adults if they are troubled. They really enjoy coming to school and engaging in the interesting opportunities provided. They have very positive attitudes towards their work and settle quickly to their tasks. Pupils recognise the importance of working to support others, in local and more distant communities. They take part in a variety of local recycling schemes.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their learning in terms of their confidence and their social and emotional development. Although many are still behind in their basic literacy and numeracy skills, information and communication technology (ICT) skills are a real strength. A parent commented, 'Links with the junior school are strong and transition is handled well so my daughter is already looking forward to Year 3'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with some strengths. Teachers help pupils make good progress in their confidence and competence in English, especially in spoken English. In both English and mathematics, teachers are quite rightly concentrating on developing speaking and listening skills in order to raise standards and bring about improvements in writing and mathematical problem solving.

Pupils enjoy learning because teachers make lessons appealing and fun. In an exciting mathematics lesson, pupils enthusiastically took turns to use the electronic whiteboard to demonstrate their understanding of symmetry. This ensured that they made good progress and that they knew instantly whether they had achieved their learning objectives. Planning for English and mathematics is clear and caters well for the needs of different pupils and pays good attention to the needs of the more able. One parent of a higher attaining pupil wrote, 'He is encouraged and enabled to perform at his best.' The school makes excellent use of additional teaching and support staff, who work very effectively with groups of pupils who have specific needs.

Throughout the school, good checks are kept on the progress of pupils. The information gathered is used effectively by teachers to plan the next steps in their learning. However, some of the information is difficult to access as it is not yet available electronically.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and supports pupils' needs extremely well. From their earliest days in the Foundation Stage, children are introduced to well planned, stimulating activities. These combine well across the different areas of learning with excellent use made of outdoor opportunities and ICT. An appropriate priority is put on children's personal development, communication and literacy skills. This results in the good achievement of many in these areas, where they gain increasing confidence in their own abilities. Several children were heard to say, 'I've done well haven't I?'

The curriculum is continually adapted to meet the needs of all pupils and there have been exciting developments, particularly in science and ICT. Particularly effective strategies are in place to help motivate boys' learning and increase their achievement. Very good additional help is given to pupils with learning difficulties or who are at the early stage of learning English.

There are many good opportunities that enrich pupils' learning, ranging from visitors into the school such as theatre and science groups, to visits out of school. A parent commented, 'Since starting at school our son has developed a thirst for learning. Clubs are good and he attends to his homework with enthusiasm'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, support and guidance are excellent. All adults know individual pupils very well and use this knowledge to ensure sensitive, personal and effective support. Effective safeguarding systems are in place. The school has an excellent partnership with parents and works hard to involve them in extending their children's learning and promoting regular attendance. As a result, pupils settle quickly and feel safe. A parent commented, 'I am extremely happy with the school. Pupils are treated individually and their different needs are well met'. Good quality guidance in lessons is given to pupils, including to those with learning difficulties or disabilities, vulnerable pupils and those who are at the early stages of learning English. Pupils are clear what they have to do to improve because teachers regularly provide them with high quality verbal feedback. The school makes very good use of external support to meet individual needs. Group targets are based firmly on basic skills and are consistently and successfully used in lessons to support and further pupils' achievement. Most pupils are aware of their targets and understand what they mean.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management and clear roles and responsibilities mean that the school shares a clear vision in which pupils' needs come first. Under the clear guidance of the headteacher, responsible staff regularly monitor provision and developments. They are aware of changes needed to make further improvement and raise pupils' achievement. Self-evaluation

systems are thorough and accurate and inform improvement strategies. The school knows itself well.

All staff work effectively as a team, their work is valued, professional development opportunities are good and they are convinced they can make a difference. Consequently, morale is high. The arrangements for helping newly qualified teachers settle into the school are good, and this supports their improving practice. Improvement strategies are having a positive impact, particularly on the curriculum which is now excellent. Teaching is improving as is pupils' achievement. The school is aware of the need to improve the processes for tracking ensuring that data is clearly presented to support accurate analysis. This is currently in hand and senior leaders are planning to implement the change to a computerised system. Governors are fully involved in school self-evaluation, monitoring and strategic management through regular and meaningful contact with the school, staff and pupils.

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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?	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

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?	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?	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?	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

18 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Underhill Infant School, Barnet, EN5 2LZ

What a lovely time we had in your school recently. How helpful and grown up you were when you talked to us. You take part in lots of interesting activities. We saw lots of photographs of you growing beautiful flowers and tasty vegetables. You really know all about recycling! We were pleased to see that you behave well and come to school regularly. This helps you to learn better, well done!

We agree with you and your parents and think that Underhill Infant is a good school with some really, really extra good bits! Your headteacher does a good job along with her deputy and all the other teachers. We noticed how much you enjoy using the special whiteboards in your classrooms and how very good your teachers are at using them. Your teachers plan interesting work for all of you which makes you think really hard. This means you learn lots of new things every day.

Even in a good school like yours, there are things which can be made better. We have asked your headteacher to make sure that all of you are able to solve problems better in mathematics and improve your writing by speaking about it more and listening really hard. The teachers watch how you make progress very carefully, but sometimes they find this hard because they have to look at lots of pieces of paper! I have asked them to go ahead with their plan to use the computer to help them do this better.

Once again, thank you for giving us such a warm welcome and we wish you lots of fun with your learning.

Kind Regards

Glynis Bradley-Peat Lead Inspector