



Alexandra Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101585
Local Authority Bromley
Inspection number 286114
Inspection dates 27–28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Lynn Bappa

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Cator Road
School category	Community		Sydenham
Age range of pupils	7–11		London SE26 5DS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8778 3961
Number on roll (school)	235	Fax number	0208 778 6877
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Jon Sherman
		Headteacher	Mr Justin Burt
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a two-form entry school situated on the outskirts of Bromley. Its pupils come from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average, although there are few pupils in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Alexandra Junior is a satisfactory school with some good features. The school is a harmonious community in which every child really does matter. Pupils behave well, attend regularly, enjoy lessons and other activities and make good progress in developing their personal and social skills.

By the end of Year 6, standards are below average overall. This represents satisfactory achievement, given pupils' below average starting points. Pupils do best in English, where attainment exceeds national expectations. Standards in mathematics, however, have fallen significantly in recent years and test results for pupils in Year 6 in 2006 were well below average. The school has put into place a variety of initiatives to tackle this problem. These initiatives have accelerated pupils' progress in lessons and inspection evidence shows that standards have begun to rise but remain below average. However, more remains to be done to ensure that standards in mathematics catch up with those in English. The current position indicates that the school's targets are challenging but achievable.

The headteacher has a clear focus on raising standards and ensuring that pupils do as well as they can. He knows the school well and is quietly determined that pupils' achievements in mathematics must not be allowed to slip again. There are many signs of real improvement and the school is in a sound position to build on these. The school has successfully tackled the issues for improvement from the last inspection and one success has been that writing standards have risen significantly. A noticeable feature of the school is the good teamwork which ensures everyone plays an integral part in helping the school to move forward. There is a clear commitment towards making every child feel valued. Staff, parents and pupils are rightly proud of this aspect of school life.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In most lessons teachers make sure that they use a range of interesting teaching styles, maintaining pupils' concentration, interest and motivation throughout the lesson. However, teaching in mathematics is still too variable, particularly in the amount of challenge provided for the most able pupils. Many teachers mark pupils' work regularly and write helpful comments that show them exactly how to improve. Some books seen during the inspection, however, had not been marked for a long time or did not contain enough useful guidance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics through better and more consistent teaching.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching focusing particularly on teachers' skills in marking so that pupils are given clear guidance on the next steps in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are below average overall. Standards in English, however, are above average. Many pupils read and write fluently for different purposes and their creative writing is often of a good standard. As one pupil commented, 'I really enjoy story writing because you can use your imagination.' Standards in mathematics, however, have fallen in recent years and were well below average in 2006. The school has taken robust action to tackle this decline. These actions are bearing fruit. The school's assessments and inspection evidence indicate that results are likely to improve this year. Attainment in mathematics is still below average, however, and more remains to be done to ensure that pupils achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities gain the basic skills for learning and make sound progress because they are supported well by teachers and classroom assistants. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school because, as one boy commented, 'It is a nice place to work.' A small number of parents expressed concerns about behaviour, but pupils told inspectors that adults deal well with any incidents and the recently revised behaviour policy works well. Inspectors agree with the pupils and think that the majority of pupils behave well around the school and in most lessons.

Pupils feel safe, free from prejudice and say that any bullying is dealt with fairly and quickly. They are keen to take responsibility and their contributions to the school and wider community are good. By the time they leave the school, pupils have become well-rounded individuals because of their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual development well. They enjoy assemblies, appreciate the wider world of art and music and benefit from good opportunities to reflect and pray. A visiting artist recently worked with the whole school to create a ceramic mural with the theme 'what does thinking look like?' This sort of opportunity greatly enhances pupils' enjoyment of learning.

Pupils participate enthusiastically in sports and show a good understanding of why it is important to take part in them. They explain which foods are good for you and enjoy the tasty and nutritious meals they eat at lunchtimes. Pupils' well developed social skills and improving achievements in literacy and numeracy prepare them soundly for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers explain activities clearly so pupils know what they need to learn and why. They use questions well to probe and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Learning is enriched by exciting and colourful displays, such as the philosophical questions dotted around the school, although very few of these displays present mathematics in an exciting way. Most pupils behave well in lessons and want to work hard. Occasional disruptions occur, however, when they do not find the work interesting.

Teachers have worked hard at improving learning in mathematics. Although these improvements have not yet had time to have an impact on national test results, work in exercise books shows that standards are beginning to rise. However, the quality of teaching in this subject is still too variable. The school recognises that it needs to do more to encourage pupils to become independent learners and to work on real-life problem solving activities. Marking is not always helpful because it is not regular enough to show pupils how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It promotes learning and pupils' personal development well. Recent improvements to planning in mathematics are beginning to be reflected in better standards. New activities, including Sudoku and philosophy lessons, help pupils to think in a logical way and there is a greater focus on basic calculation skills. The curriculum is well supported by a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that add excitement to pupils' learning and provide them with many opportunities to develop their personal qualities. Music is particularly well-promoted with good opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to extend their skills and perform in local concerts. Events such as 'World Book Day' promote pupils' creativity and imaginations well, as, for example when older pupils wrote stories about Queen Alexandra.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Pupils settle in well when they transfer from the infant school and there are good arrangements in place to ensure a smooth transition to secondary school. Pupils are confident they have adults to turn to should any problem arise. The positive relationships with parents and the good levels of support from outside agencies and the learning mentor contribute significantly to pupils' satisfactory progress. Vulnerable pupils are supported well and included in all aspects of school life. Arrangements for child protection, carrying out risk assessments and vetting staff are secure.

Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving. The systems for monitoring children's progress have improved and teachers are beginning to systematically track pupils' progress. This information is helping the school to identify how to best support pupils in mathematics and thus raise standards. Pupils are becoming more actively involved in the assessment process through the 'passport for success' which records their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school and provides caring and reflective leadership. He is supported by a committed leadership team who are effectively focused on raising standards. The school has satisfactory systems for checking how well it is doing and its views of its strengths and weaknesses are realistic and honest. The recently appointed numeracy co-ordinator has made a good start in tackling the problems in mathematics and there is a tangible sense of determination to do better. There has not yet been sufficient time to see the full impact of all the recent initiatives to raise standards in mathematics. The percentage of pupils who gain the higher levels in the national test results at the end of Year 6 is still not high enough, for example.

The school regularly seeks and acts upon the views of parents and their children through surveys and through the school council. Governors are supportive and are becoming increasingly confident in checking the school's performance and asking staff challenging questions.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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?	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?	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

Thank you for making us so welcome and sharing with us your thoughts about your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to some of the school council and seeing some of the activities you were busy with during Book Day, especially the Year 6 vivid descriptions of Aunt Spiker and Aunt Sponge.

We think that yours is a satisfactory school that is getting better in many ways. You obviously enjoy lessons and other activities, and contribute much in making the school successful. You particularly enjoy writing, where we saw some of your best work. Your behaviour, positive attitudes to work and play and the ways in which you care for one another are good. The headteacher and all the staff are obviously working hard to improve the school. They certainly believe that all of you can achieve well, so it's up to you to prove them right and help the school move from being satisfactory to good in all parts of its work.

We have asked your teachers to make a few improvements to make the school even better. We have asked them to carry on helping you to improve your standards in mathematics. You can play your part by always working as hard as you can and asking for help if you need it. You have some brilliant displays in your school, but not many of them are about your work in numeracy. We think it would help if there were more displays that showed how much fun mathematics can be! You may have some good ideas to help with this. We think your teachers have worked hard to make lessons interesting so that you learn more quickly. We have asked them to carry on doing this, so that even more lessons are good ones. We think your teachers need to do more to help you understand exactly how to improve your work. You can help by always asking them if you do not understand what you need to do to improve your work.

I hope that you continue to enjoy your time at school and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Bappa, Lead Inspector