



Curwen Primary and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102715
Local Authority Newham
Inspection number 286468
Inspection dates 10–11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Judith Dawson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Atlas Road
School category	Community		London
Age range of pupils	3–11		E13 0AG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8472 0290
Number on roll (school)	409	Fax number	020 8503 5183
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Shana Miah
		Headteacher	Mr Paul Harris
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves an area of high ethnic diversity. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average and there is a high level of deprivation. Over two-thirds of pupils do not have English as their first language and over a fifth are at the early stages of learning English. Pupil mobility is above average. The school is part of the South East Newham Educational Action Zone. It is a member of the New Deal for Communities initiative and holds the Healthy Schools' award. The headteacher has been in post since January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Curwen Primary and Nursery School has been through a period where standards have fallen and pupils were underachieving. The new headteacher, working closely with the deputy headteacher, has begun to reverse this trend. This illustrates the school's good capacity to improve. Pupils say that behaviour is much better and they have interesting things to do. The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness and inspectors agree that it now provides a satisfactory standard of education.

Standards, overall, are below average. Taking account of pupils' starting points, this represents a satisfactory level of achievement, but there is some variation across the school. Children start school with low levels of knowledge and skills, especially in communication, language and literacy and personal development, many having little English language. Staff in the effective Nursery and Reception classes help children to develop their skills well although few achieve their learning goals by the time they join Year 1. This good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 so that, although few attain the higher levels, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average by the end of Year 2. In the 2006 national tests, pupils in Year 6 reached standards in English that were close to the national average, achieving well. However, standards in mathematics were low and pupils did not make enough progress. The school has put in place a range of measures to address this underachievement but it is too early to evaluate the impact of these. Standards in Year 6 are now close to the national average in English although they remain below average in mathematics and science. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to develop skills that prepare them for their future lives and use information and communication technology (ICT) skills to aid research and to support their learning in other subjects. However, in spite of recent improvements in resources, some hardware systems are unreliable and the ICT suite is poorly designed, inhibiting pupils' learning.

This is an inclusive school where every child matters. As a result, pupils enjoy school. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. They enter into the many activities provided with enthusiasm. Pupils respect each other and the adults in school and behave well. They know how to keep healthy and safe. The school council has a big impact on school life. They interview and appoint pupils who apply to be monitors, for example. Pupils receive good pastoral care, guidance and support, enabling them to thrive in school. Academic guidance is satisfactory.

The headteacher has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has accurately identified areas for development. Recent changes in the school's management structure are helping staff to feel empowered to contribute to school improvement. As one subject leader said, 'Our plans for development are now based on the needs of the school rather than just our own subjects.' Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. New initiatives have not had time to impact on pupils' achievements. Improvements in assessment have identified pupils who need additional support and relevant training for teaching assistants enables them to provide good support. The monitoring of teaching and learning by the senior management team is enabling teachers to improve their practice and, although weaknesses remain,

teachers' planning is beginning to be adapted to meet pupils' needs. Teaching is satisfactory overall and many lessons observed were good. While most teachers give pupils good advice about improving their work, this is not consistent throughout the school, especially in mathematics.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work, especially in mathematics.
- Ensure that all teachers adapt their planning to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Improve the accommodation and resources for ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to the school is low. Children have to be particularly well supported in developing social and communication skills. They achieve well in Foundation Stage and this continues in Years 1 and 2 but standards, by the end of Year 2, rise and fall year on year. Although results in Year 6 national tests improved between 2003 and 2005 they were particularly low in mathematics in 2006 where they fell well short of the challenging targets that had been set. The school has clear strategies in place to address this underachievement with an effective tracking system that is correctly identifying levels of underachievement. Where pupils are grouped by ability, the most able pupils achieve well because most lessons are challenging. Less able pupils, pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and pupils in the early stages of learning English are well supported, enabling them to achieve satisfactorily. Occasionally, average attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should because the planning is not adapted to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils enjoy school and work hard. They behave well and playtimes are happy and sociable. Pupils are confident, helpful and very courteous to one another and adults. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to think about ideas, actions and their consequences and they are eager to give their opinions. On several occasions pupils came up to inspectors to give their positive opinions about school issues. They are very proud of the school uniform. Pupils think of others in the actions they take. Drama and art feature strongly in the life of the school. Pupils show empathy with feelings of people from different cultures as shown in a lesson about 'Windrush' for Black History week. School Council has instigated improvement in a range of issues including school dinners and playground facilities. The success of these make a significant contribution to pupils' self esteem. However, pupils are not given sufficient information to enable them to take responsibility for improving their work, especially in mathematics.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The caring relationships in school provide a good platform for learning. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and work hard to achieve well. They are well supported by trained teaching assistants. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good where teachers plan carefully and provide a wide range of effective learning opportunities and children learn quickly. This good practice extends into Years 1, 2 and 3 although sometimes the rate of learning slows when some pupils take time to settle at the start of lessons. However, in the rest of the school, planning is not always adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with average abilities. Gifted and talented pupils are fully challenged and given opportunities to apply their skills. For example, a group of such pupils took responsibility for a large part of the production of an outstanding film about bullying.

Teachers enable pupils to develop independent learning skills and they proudly share work completed using library and internet facilities. Marking of pupils' work does not always sufficiently indicate what they have to do to improve so they are not able to take full responsibility for their learning. Sometimes pupils' writing is devalued because it is written on white boards and then erased. This also prevents them from having sufficient permanent record of their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. Pupils say learning is fun and value practical opportunities to learn through experience. Links between subjects are not yet fully established missing opportunities for pupils to extend their basic skills. The school has addressed recent unsatisfactory provision for mathematics and the curriculum for English and mathematics now meets pupils' needs. However, weaknesses in the provision for ICT, for example, the unreliable wireless network, prevent pupils having full use of computers to support work in other subjects. A good range of extra curricular activities include sports clubs, information technology and cheerleading. Many of these activities take place at lunchtimes to ensure that pupils with additional after school commitments can take part. Local and residential visits bring relevance to learning and are greatly enjoyed by pupils. Members of the community, for example the police, contribute to pupils' learning. Healthy and safe lifestyles are promoted effectively. Good transition arrangements ensure pupils are well prepared for transfer to secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school looks after pupils' personal needs well. Some analysis is made of individual educational needs and in the main pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and

those in the early stages of learning English are given effective and accurate support. However, some academic support is less effective, particularly in Year 5 where not enough attention is given to ensuring that pupils understand what they need to do in order to improve. Behaviour is good because it is well managed and based on respect for all.

Pupils are safe and secure. They happily come to a well organised, welcoming school. They are confident in all they do. They know that they can turn to adults who will sort out their worries and upsets, as well as play with them at playtimes. Pupils new to the school are made welcome and settle quickly. Child protection and health and safety procedures are effective. The school works closely with a wide range of outside helpers who support needy pupils. Rigorous monitoring of attendance and punctuality has been very successful. . A well attended breakfast club supports pupils' social and educational development well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Until the headteacher joined the school at the beginning of this year the school was experiencing some significant problems with a drop in standards and some unsatisfactory behaviour amongst the pupils. Behaviour is now good. As one parent said 'So many areas of Curwen School have improved since the arrival of Mr. Harris that the whole feel of the school has dramatically changed for the good.' Staff morale is high. Changes in the management structure of the school, supported by training for subject leaders, have generated a secure foundation for school improvement. Organising older pupils into ability groups, for example, is helping teachers to meet their needs more accurately. Leaders are well aware that there is work to do to raise pupils' achievement. This is a school with a strong capacity for improvement as the changes begin to impact on pupils' learning. Most governors are new to their roles. They are rapidly learning the skills of governance but are only just beginning to question and evaluate school initiatives.

Resources are well managed. The school seeks every opportunity to generate funds and, although more needs to be done, particularly in ICT across the school, the accommodation and resources have improved significantly this year.

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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 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?	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.

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	2
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	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	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 all very much for your friendliness and welcome during our visit to your school. We really appreciated the way so many of you came to us to tell us about all the good things happening in your school and how happy you are. A special thanks to the school council and those of you in Year 6 who talked to Mr Warner and Mr Iles.

You told us how much the school has changed since Mr Harris came. We agree with your views that you now behave well and work hard. You made a good choice of school uniform and look very smart. You made it very clear that you enjoy your lessons. We were very impressed by the way everyone respects one another. The school takes good care of you. We agree with your views that Mr Harris has worked very hard to change your school for the better. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education and we know that your school will go from strength to strength with your help. Although some of you have not been learning as well as you could be, especially in mathematics, we can see that most of you are already getting better at your work. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes learn well because teachers make sure you learn what you need to in interesting ways. The most capable pupils amongst you have plenty of challenge. We were very impressed with your presentation about bullying.

There are one or two things we have asked the school to do to help you with your learning. Your teachers need to make sure that you all know how to improve your work, especially in mathematics. This will help you to do the best you can. Sometimes you are not learning the things that you need to be or the work is too easy or difficult. We have asked all the teachers to make sure the work they give you is right for each of you. I am sure you would agree with us that the computer suite and wireless network need improving so that you can use the computers more easily.

We hope you all have a very good half term and continue to enjoy your happy school.

Best wishes

Mrs J Dawson (Lead Inspector)