

Downshall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102800
Local Authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	286497
Inspection date	20 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Anthony Green

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	482
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Asif
Headteacher	Mr I Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001
School address	Meads Lane Seven Kings Ilford IG3 8UG
Telephone number	020 8590 2157
Fax number	020 8597 6690

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school. Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds and almost all are learning English as an additional language. A quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The socio-economic circumstances are mixed but with a high proportion from less favourable circumstances. A quarter are refugee pupils. There are many more looked after and vulnerable pupils than in most schools. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is average but those who have a statement of special educational need is greater than that found nationally. When pupils start school their skills and abilities are much lower than those expected, especially in language. Three quarters of pupils arrive with little or no English. Between 2001 and 2003 there was a considerable change of staff at all levels, including the headteacher.

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 and rapidly improving school with many strengths. It provides a good education for its pupils. For two years the school went through a period of exceptional staff changes at all levels, which saw a drop in standards. Since the appointment of the present headteacher the school has moved forward at a fast rate. The headteacher's outstanding leadership gives an exceptionally clear vision for the school. This has led to a more consistent approach in teaching and learning. It has also produced a caring and inclusive ethos that reaches out to the wider community. There is overwhelming support by the majority of parents. One wrote 'I have been extremely pleased with the school. My daughter is well cared for and happy. I am particularly impressed with the school's partnership with parents'.

There has been a year-by-year improvement in standards which are now average overall. Pupils' achievement is good. They make rapid progress in the Foundation Stage, especially in language and social skills and continue to build on this very good start throughout the school. By Year 6 standards are average overall, although pupils are doing better in science and mathematics than in writing. The school has recently introduced an initiative to improve the quality of writing as well as language. This is impacting very well on achievement in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, where it has been the initial main focus.

The curriculum is good and enriched by a good range of activities. Good links are being developed between subjects to make them more relevant and interesting and, especially, to give pupils more opportunities for practical experiences. This is also increasing their opportunities for writing in different subjects in different styles.

The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and pupils are generally well managed and so there is a calm atmosphere in lessons. Teachers' marking is detailed. Well informed support staff give very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, emotional difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language. As a result, these groups of pupils make good progress. All groups of pupils achieve well and are soundly prepared for their future well-being.

Pupils collaborate well and are learning skills which equip them for their future. They feel safe and secure. They have a good understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle but do not fully appreciate the need to eat healthily. For example, packed lunches contain unhealthy food. The pastoral care and support of pupils is a significant strength. Support for vulnerable pupils and those with social and emotional difficulties is excellent, enabling them to develop their self-esteem and personal and social skills. The headteacher has taken appropriate action to seek improvements and is ably supported by an outstanding senior leadership team and an outstanding governing body. The school is accurate in the self-evaluation of its performance and has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing
- Ensure pupils have a better understanding of the need to eat healthily.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are broadly average by Year 6. Pupils enter Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below the expected levels, especially in language. They make very good progress overall and outstanding progress in speech and language, because of the many opportunities they have to take part in stimulating and practical activities. One parent perceptively wrote 'Since my child has joined the Nursery he has learned a lot very quickly. I would put it down to the hard efforts of all the teachers and associate members'. By the time they enter Year 1 pupils are almost in line with expectations in the six areas of learning. They continue to make good progress and by Year 2 are reaching standards that are in line in reading, slightly above in mathematics but below average in writing. However, new approaches in teaching sounds and writing have led to improved results. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to Year 6 and by Year 6 pupils' attainment is average overall, though not as strong in writing. All groups of pupils achieve at broadly similar rates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well being, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions, are good. Whilst there are a few instances of poor behaviour most pupils behave well. They are friendly and confident and enthusiastic about their school. Pupils feel safe and know that they can always talk to staff. Pupils' views are welcomed and they make a good contribution to the school. Surveys by staff and the school council show that pupils enjoy learning. The active school council has helped to improve facilities. One said 'We make a big difference. We've done a lot for the school'. As a result of close liaison with parents, attendance has improved significantly from below average in 2004 to average and, but for extended visits abroad to celebrate religious festivals, would be even better. Pupils enjoy taking part in the life of the school and the responsibilities they are given. Good links are made with the community such as visits to a local day centre to talk or sing to senior citizens.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and so pupils make good progress. In the Foundation Stage, the knowledgeable staff create an exciting and caring learning environment for the very young children, where the development of language is central to learning. As a result children make rapid progress in language acquisition. In Years 1 to 6 teachers make learning enjoyable and relevant to pupils. They work very closely with the effective classroom assistants to ensure that pupils, especially those with learning and emotional difficulties, make good progress. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Where classes have interactive whiteboards, these are used well to add impact and interest to lessons, although teachers' presentation is not always as good as it could be. Assessment information and a comprehensive tracking system are used well to plan for individual needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and enriched well by visits, visitors and a Year 6 residential visit. The developing links between subjects increases motivation and enjoyment. A key strength is the way a new initiative for literacy is enabling the many pupils who speak English as an additional language to access the curriculum and achieve well. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the progress pupils make, especially in their writing, which has been a target for the school. There is a good range of well attended extra-curricular activities. The school is working towards the 'Active Mark' for physical education and employs three physical education leaders to ensure all pupils have good quality experiences. Pupils are taught about the need to eat healthily but not all put this into practice.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. There is a strong commitment by all staff to ensure that pupils are safeguarded. The 'Pupil Investigation Team' immediately follows up any incidents of poor behaviour and has contributed to pupils feeling safe and secure. Pupils who feel unable to play with others at lunch time or who would like extra adult support have the opportunity to attend a lunch time 'Pathways' group. Pupils settle into the Nursery well because of very good induction procedures. Excellent links have been made with outside support agencies. There are excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress so that support is put in place at an early stage for anyone who is struggling. Child protection and health and safety arrangements are very secure. As one parent confirmed 'I was concerned about my daughter's speech and concentration so I shared these with the staff. They were quick to follow these up with me. I am very happy with the support and guidance we have received.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's outstanding leadership and management have contributed greatly to pupils' good personal development and academic achievement. He is very ably supported by an excellent senior leadership team. The effect of his exceptional leadership is that all staff feel valued and strive to do as well as they can. Team work is a very strong feature of the school. His strong focus on raising standards and achievement is impacting throughout the school. The quality of leadership and management in the Foundation Stage is very good. Some subject managers are new to their leadership role but with the support of the senior leadership team are quickly developing their roles. All teachers have been observed teaching by senior leaders and provided with clear guidance. This has led to improvements in teaching and learning.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses accurately and has identified the correct priorities for improvement, which is helping it to meet its challenging targets.

Governance is outstanding. The well informed governing body is very well led by an experienced chair of governors. The governors bring a range of skills to the school. They have an excellent understanding of the strengths and priorities for development. They closely monitor and

evaluate performance and provide very good challenge to school leaders. Financial strategies are very effectively linked to enhancing learning.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	3
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?	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	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

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you about your work and your school. I was very impressed by the school council members I spoke to and how they are helping to improve your school for you. I also enjoyed listening to the choir. You should be very proud of the enjoyment you bring when you sing.

You told me that you go to a good school and I agree. This is what I think is especially good:

- You all work hard and achieve well.
- Teaching is good. Your teachers plan interesting lessons for you, which you enjoy. I enjoyed joining in with the Year 6 healthy food tasting lesson!
- Your classroom assistants support you well, not only in lessons but in the playground and around the school at lunchtimes.
- You go to a very caring school. All staff want you to do well and to be safe and happy.
- Your headteacher, senior teachers and governors are outstanding. You are very lucky. It means that they are doing everything they can to make the school an exciting and interesting place, where you can learn.

Even in a good school, things can be better.

- I have asked your teachers to give you even more opportunities to develop and improve your writing and styles of writing in all subjects.
- I noticed at lunch times that many of you with packed lunches were eating too many things that were not healthy. I have asked your school to try help you understand more about why it is important to eat healthily.

I wish you all well for the future.

Anthony GreenLead inspector