

# Highlands Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131013
<b>Local Authority</b>	Redbridge
<b>Inspection number</b>	293689
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nick Butt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	690
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Colin Runeckles
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Buttress
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 February 2002
<b>School address</b>	Highlands Gardens Ilford IG1 3LE
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8554 0044
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8518 2322

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a very large primary school serving a mixed catchment area with elements of social deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. A large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. The pupils come from many minority ethnic groups, with one third of Pakistani heritage. More pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities than usual. The number who join and leave the school outside normal times is above average. The school has received awards for the high quality of its creative arts and extra-curricular activities and for promoting healthy lifestyles.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school with many excellent features. Pupils achieve extremely well because consistently good and often outstanding teaching gives them a real thirst for knowledge. The school's emphasis on developing pupils as learners makes them exceptionally receptive to new ideas and means they cooperate together in an exemplary way. A rich and stimulating curriculum excites and interests pupils, and contributes very effectively to their outstanding personal development and well-being. Their behaviour is extremely good and they help one another as monitors in school and as buddies in the playground. They know all about living a healthy lifestyle, and enjoy the very wide range of clubs. One pupil said, 'They are a chance to learn new things, even out of school hours.'

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those expected, many of them speaking very little English. By the time they leave the school, standards are above average. Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved this year and is now good as a result of the considerable impact of the Foundation Stage manager. A strong team is being forged, with a good mix of exciting and practical activities to interest young children, and a focus on developing their language skills. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards are above average.

Outstanding leadership and management at all levels are the key to the school's success, with very well defined roles and responsibilities and a common purpose to bring out the best in all pupils. The headteacher has a passion for developing pupils' learning, and her vision is evident throughout the school. There is a very high level of care for all pupils, so that potential barriers affecting their development are removed. They are able to thrive in a school which, despite its huge size, maintains a family atmosphere where pupils are valued and nurtured as individuals.

Meticulous procedures for assessing the school's performance give leaders an extremely clear view of how well it is doing and enable them to set the right priorities for its development. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully in the core subjects of English and mathematics. In other subjects, there are different systems of assessment, many of them informal. The school now wishes to streamline these into a common approach so that it is easier to see the gains pupils are making in their learning. In view of the excellent progress the school has made in recent years in maintaining outstanding levels of achievement, its capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve assessment of pupils' progress in the non-core subjects by streamlining the different systems currently in use.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are above average. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, but because many of them are learning English, they enter Year 1 with standards that are often below those expected. The rate of progress accelerates as pupils become more proficient in English. Standards rose significantly in Year 2 in 2006 as a result of strong teaching and an emphasis on developing language skills and were close to average. In national tests in 2006, Year 6 pupils attained standards that were above average

in English and average in mathematics. A focus on the teaching of calculation has lifted standards in mathematics this year. The school is consistently among the top ten per cent of schools for the value it adds to pupils' learning. Because the achievement of pupils is tracked so carefully, any at risk of falling behind are identified rapidly and support put in place for them. This means that no groups are underachieving, and that pupils with learning difficulties also achieve extremely well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils agree behaviour codes at the beginning of the year and actively support one another to uphold them when working in groups. For example there is a 'no put-downs' rule. Pupils support the warning-card system used in the playground. One said, 'People learn from their mistakes and their behaviour improves.' Pupils have a real appreciation of one another's cultures and join together to celebrate them, for example in the annual Carnival. They look forward to 'Healthy Highlands Week' when they 'eat something new and take exercise.' Pupils feel safe in school, and say there are adults they would turn to with a worry. The school council organises new playground equipment and helps to raise money for charity. Pupils are very involved in their local community, for example through working with adults from a community day centre on a drumming and dance project. They published a book for the school's centenary drawing on the memories and experiences of local people. Pupils love coming to school. One commented, 'While we're learning we also have fun.' Good attendance reflects the school's success in encouraging families to visit relatives in other countries outside term time. Pupils are extremely well prepared for a life of learning, leaving as confident and well-rounded individuals.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils are involved in their learning to an exceptional degree, becoming highly sophisticated in working together, and in assessing one another's work. The classrooms have displays that celebrate pupils' achievements, and also help them to understand the bigger picture of what is planned for that term. Lessons are fun and have a real purpose. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote and recorded radio advertisements for the latest trainers, inventing snappy slogans to hook their listeners. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and set work that is well suited to their different abilities. Lessons are run at a brisk pace and pupils are clear about what they have to learn. Very effective use is made of technology to support learning. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the outstanding achievement of pupils who have learning difficulties. Pupils who are learning English are extremely well supported too.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding and includes excellent enrichment. A thematic approach links subjects together where practical, and the curriculum caters very well for pupils' differing learning needs. This means that activities are lively and stimulating and designed to include all pupils, especially those whose first language is not English. The curriculum is under constant

review, so that it remains fresh and relevant. In the Foundation Stage, changes introduced this year have resulted in a good balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. There is a purposeful approach, with effective links to the term's topic. The curriculum is extremely well enriched by the many clubs, visitors and visits. African drumming is timetabled for whole classes, and pupils are often involved in creative projects, such as designing and making a large mosaic, or constructing a stained-glass Centenary Window. The school takes full advantage of the rich heritage of museums and galleries London offers. Reflecting upon a recent visit to the Imperial War Museum, one pupil said, 'It made us really want to go deep inside the world of history to find out how Hitler did his deeds.'

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. There are excellent systems in place to identify and support a wide range of needs, pinpointing exactly what help the pupil requires. The level of support and how it is to be carried out is recorded for each class. This is so that staffing and resources are used to best effect and to enable pupils to make extremely good progress. Pupils are treated with respect and respond very positively to adults. A pupil said, 'I like the staff because they're really friendly and kind - the mid-day assistants are very helpful.' These excellent role models encourage pupils in their personal development and foster their outstanding attitudes to learning. Pupils are given good academic guidance and support through effective marking, which shows them how to improve. In Year 6 this is exceptional, with a real dialogue going on between pupils and teachers. Their progress is tracked very effectively in mathematics and English, but the school has recognised that a streamlined approach to assessment of other subjects would help to track pupils' learning in the wider curriculum.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher provides excellent leadership, extremely ably supported by the deputy heads and the senior management team. Leaders are confident and show initiative, very clearly focused on raising the achievement of all pupils and removing any potential barriers. Very rigorous systems for monitoring all that goes on involve staff at every level and are extremely well managed by the school's business and data managers. This means that everybody shares in evaluating the work of the school, and in saying how it could be even better. Team leaders of year groups play a particularly valuable role in ensuring the high quality of provision. The impact of this common approach is seen in pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being and in their consistently high achievement. Even though the school is very big, with a large staff, there is a high level of consistency permeating its work. This is because leaders have shared their vision extremely effectively and put in place procedures that are clearly understood and followed. Parents are very supportive of the school. One wrote, 'The school encourages a three way partnership between the child, the school and the home through sharing ideas, experiences and strategies.' The governors fulfil their responsibilities well, and are involved in developing strategic plans and in evaluating their impact. Many make regular visits to the school and have forged links with curriculum teams.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	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**

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I did enjoy my visit. You have a fantastic school. There are so many things that are wonderful about it that I can't mention them all, but I will tell you the main ones.

- You make extremely good progress in your learning.
- The teaching is outstanding. Your lessons are interesting and fun.
- Your behaviour is exemplary. You care for one another very well and help to make the school a better place by respecting each other.
- The staff care for you extremely well. The school has a lovely family atmosphere, even though it is so big.
- The leadership of the headteacher and other leaders is excellent, as they make sure that the school is firing on all cylinders.
- There are lots of exciting things for you to do in music, sport and the arts, both in school and outside through clubs and visits to places of interest.

The teachers give you good guidance and support, especially in the way they mark your books. They keep very careful track of how you are doing in English and mathematics. Now they want to make sure you are doing just as well in other subjects by finding a clearer way of measuring your progress. I agree that this would be a good idea. I am sure they would like to hear your views about how you feel you are getting on.

Thank you once again for all your help. My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Butt, Lead Inspector