



Culvers House Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131103
Local Authority Sutton
Inspection number 293705
Inspection dates 26–27 September 2006
Reporting inspector Lynn Bappa

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Orchard Avenue
School category	Foundation		Mitcham
Age range of pupils	3–11		CR4 4JH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8255 6199
Number on roll (school)	360	Fax number	020 8255 6195
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Sue Smith
		Headteacher	Lynne Smart-Steel
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	26–27 September 2006	293705

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Culvers House is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with about one fifth coming from a variety of minority ethnic heritages. There are very few pupils with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the school houses an Opportunities Base for up to 16 physically disabled learners.

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 school that enables its pupils to achieve well. The school has had many obstacles to overcome since its last inspection and the success of its work since then is evident. The school is a happy, harmonious and safe place. There is a very strong commitment towards making every child feel valued and fully included in every aspect of school life. Staff, parents and pupils are rightly proud of this. As a result, pupils are developing well as individuals. Attendance has improved and is now broadly average, although a small number of parents do not ensure that their children come to school regularly enough. Parents are very pleased with what the school offers. As one parent commented, 'Culvers House has always put the children first at all times'.

The headteacher has a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and of what needs to be done to improve it. She is supported well by the deputy headteacher, staff and governors. A real strength of the school is the high quality of teamwork and commitment which ensures that everyone, including support staff, the lunch time supervisors and office staff play an integral part in moving the school forward.

In the year since she was appointed, the headteacher has put strategies into place to improve teaching, enrich the curriculum and raise standards. These have been successful. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are good and standards are beginning to rise. When the children start school, many do not have the skills expected for their age, especially in writing and calculation. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned and children in the Reception class make a good start to their education. This good achievement is built on so that pupils leave school with standards that are just above average. The school makes full use of its excellent links with outside agencies to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported. As a result, most make very good progress towards their individual targets. Teachers are getting better at setting challenging work for higher attaining pupils. So far, this has increased the percentage of pupils gaining higher levels but some higher attainers still do not achieve as well as they could. Pupils of all abilities enjoy their lessons and quickly become confident and happy learners who are keen to do well.

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders have developed good procedures for monitoring the school's work. The drive to improve standards is fully supported by subject leaders but at the moment they do not all play a rigorous enough part in improving teaching and learning in their areas. The school has begun to provide training to help them to become more involved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more able pupils are consistently challenged to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in English, mathematics and science.
- Involve subject leaders more in improving teaching and learning and raising achievement.

- Work with parents to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who do not come to school regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of starting points, but below average standards overall. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and continue to make good progress during their time in school. Standards at the end of Year 2 are in line with what is expected for pupils of this age. They leave school in Year 6 with standards that are just above average, although the proportions of pupils who achieve the highest levels in English, mathematics and science are below average. The school is well aware of this situation and is working hard to improve the rates of progress made by higher attainers. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are part of the Opportunities Base make good progress and the school makes sure that these pupils are fully included in every part of school life.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being are good. Most children enjoy coming to school and participate actively in everything it has to offer them. They are confident and outgoing. They display a great deal of common sense and have very good social skills. They are rightly proud of their school and its caring ethos. They report bullying, if it occurs, and play and work together happily. Pupils show a good understanding of safety issues. They take great care to ensure that children who use walking frames, for example, can move around the school easily and safely. Pupils behave well and are polite and friendly to each other and to staff and visitors.

At the time of the last inspection, attendance was below average. The school is working very hard with parents to ensure that their children attend regularly and on time. As a result, punctuality has got better and attendance has improved, although there are too many parents who do not send a note to explain their child's absence.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good understanding of right and wrong, coupled with a sense of fairness. They have a keen interest in other cultures and religious traditions. School councillors are pleased that their views are taken seriously by the school and pupils contribute to the wider community through, for example, raising money for mental health charities.

They enjoy sporting activities and understand why it is important to take part in them. They show a good understanding of which foods are good for you. As one pupil said, 'Broccoli helps you grow'. Another was keen to explain that 'You have to eat five fruit and vegetables every day, but strawberry jam doesn't count'. Pupils' positive attitudes and good achievement in basic skills prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has got better since the last inspection. Staffing is now stable and teachers have time to plan together and share ideas. Pupils learn well and find it helpful that teachers make it clear what they are going to learn in lessons. Underpinning the good learning is the respect that teachers show to pupils and the relaxed, yet controlled, atmosphere in classrooms. Teachers are getting better at tailoring their teaching to the right level, although they are not yet consistently challenging more able pupils to achieve as well as they might.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils leave school with a good set of basic skills. Teachers' planning in a small number of subjects lacks rigour. Pupils report that geography is their least favourite subject, for example. The curriculum is enhanced by a strong creative element and by events such as Roald Dahl day. Pupils really look forward to afternoons of drama, for example, and parents comment how pleased they are that their children learn Spanish and French in Years 3 and 4. Pupils' understanding of environmental issues is developed well through the school's commitment to recycling, its ecology club and visits to a local wetlands centre. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the clubs and visits that are provided, and uptake is high. Year 5 pupils, watching a video of last year's Year 6 residential trip, for example, said they 'just can't wait for next year to come'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils know that there is always someone to whom they can go to if they have problems or are upset. There are good child protection procedures in place. Bullying is rare and both pupils and their parents confirm this. Parents view the school as sensitive and reassuring; much of this is achieved through the highly effective extended school programme which offers a wide range of support for parents, carers and members of the local community. Parents and carers of children in the Opportunities Base attend fortnightly coffee mornings, for example.

Procedures for monitoring academic achievement have improved, although teachers do not yet make full enough use of assessment information to set targets and help pupils to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has steered the school well, following a difficult period of change, including recent high staff turnover and a long time without a permanent headteacher. There are many signs of real improvement and the school is in a good position to build on these. Teaching has improved, for example. There has not yet been sufficient time, however, to see the full impact of all the recent initiatives to raise standards. The percentage of pupils who gain the highest levels in the national test results at the end of Year 6 is still not high enough, for example. Staff and governors take good account of parental opinion and respond well to suggestions made by them. As one parent commented, 'The Head is very fair and takes on board what children and parents have to say'. Governors are supportive and have a growing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

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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?	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?	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	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?	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?	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

We enjoyed visiting your school and thank you for making us feel so welcome. It was good to chat with you and to see some of your work. We agree with you that your school is good, and there are many things we like about it:

- You all get on very well together and care for one another.
- You take your jobs seriously and act responsibly.
- Your teachers teach you well. Your lessons are interesting and fun and you work hard and make good progress.
- Your teachers and the other people who work in the school are friendly and you know you can talk to them if you have a problem or are upset.
- Your behaviour is good.

Although you go to a good school, we noticed a few things that we think your teachers could do now to make it even better. You can help them with these things:

- A few of you need to attend school more regularly. If you are ill and do not come to school, your parents or the grownups who look after you must remember to write a note to your teacher to explain why.
- We think that your teachers need to do a bit more to make sure that those of you who are capable of reaching the top levels in your work should have more chances to do so.
- Teachers who are in charge of subjects have started to look carefully at work in those subjects to make sure that everyone is doing as well as they can and that standards continue to get better. We have asked them to carry on doing this.

Thank you once again for your help. We hope you continue to enjoy the rest of your time at Culvers House.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lynn Bappa, Lead Inspector