



The Orion Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131970
Local Authority Barnet
Inspection number 293906
Inspection date 22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Graham Lee

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lanacre Avenue
School category	Community		Grahame Park, Colindale
Age range of pupils	3-11		London NW9 5FN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8205 9324
Number on roll (school)	449	Fax number	020 8905 9429
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father Dane Batley-Gladden
		Headteacher	Mr Chris Flathers
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of high social and economic need. Many pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. Two out of three are of minority ethnic heritage and more than half speak English as an additional language. More pupils join or leave the school over the course of a year than is typically the case. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is higher than average. The school is designated by the local authority as a resourced base for reintegrating pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools. The school is part of a federation of two schools, which share a headteacher and governing body.

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 which is very successful in meeting its aim of 'recognising the star in everybody'. The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational and ensures that the school has high aspirations for all its pupils regardless of their ability or background. This is recognised by parents who hold the school in high regard. One, representing the views of many, commented 'The leadership is what makes the school what it is today'. An extremely positive climate for learning has been created where every child really does matter. Pupils thrive in this environment. They love school and achieve exceptionally well.

Children enter the school with skills and understanding that are very low and many are at the early stages of learning English. The high quality provision in the Foundation Stage allows them to gain confidence and make rapid progress. This very good progress continues as pupils move through the school because of outstanding teaching and learning and a rich and exciting curriculum which really engages and motivates them. When they leave the school pupils reach standards that are above average. Those with learning difficulties make equally good progress because of very good support and high expectations. Whilst higher achieving pupils make good progress not enough are reaching the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' good basic skills and a ready facility with information and communications technology (ICT) prepare them extremely well for secondary school and the world beyond.

The school has addressed all the issues from the last inspection but is not content to rest on its laurels and has a relentless drive to continue to improve. The headteacher is very ably supported by a dynamic and effective management team and committed governing body. They have created a skilled and enthusiastic staff team who are encouraged to develop their talents to help move the school forward. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well although it is too modest in its assessment of its overall effectiveness. It is very well placed to continue to improve. The school's strengths have been recognised in the decision to federate with another local school. This has had a beneficial impact and provided fresh opportunities to share expertise, enhance cohesion in the local community and

develop the skills of senior managers at the Orion.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are unfailingly polite and treat each other and the adults in the school with respect. They show an enthusiasm for learning and behave extremely well. Those who present challenging behaviour from time to time are helped to manage their difficulties very well. Pupils feel safe and secure and trust the adults around them to look after them. They are proud of their contribution to the school community through the school council, for example. They have a good understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle and many take part enthusiastically in the wide range of sporting activities on offer.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standards achieved by the most able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement from very low starting points is outstanding. In the Foundation Stage children quickly become eager and enthusiastic learners and acquire English rapidly. Although they make very good progress in all areas of learning, standards remain below average by the time they enter Year 1. In the infants they continue to make rapid progress as their language skills are consolidated and very effective foundations are laid for their future learning. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been improving in recent years and are now broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress in the juniors is exceptionally good. By the time they leave the school standards are above average in mathematics and science and significantly above average in English. At the ages of seven and eleven most pupils reach the expected level for their age including significant numbers with learning difficulties. However, the proportion reaching higher levels is a little below average. As standards improve at the end of Year 2, the school recognises that more pupils could be reaching higher levels at the ages of seven and eleven.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is outstanding. They are bubbling with enthusiasm and queued up to tell the inspector about the things they love about the school. Attendance is improving and the school is taking effective action to improve the attendance of the relatively few pupils whose record is more erratic. Pupils are confident that any concerns they have will be promptly addressed by staff. They demonstrate considerable respect and care for one another. On the playground older pupils quickly ran to help a younger child who had fallen over. Pupils are very proud to receive 'star achiever' awards and are extremely supportive of one another. This was clear in an assembly when some pupils performed an impromptu dance routine to the evident delight of staff and pupils. School councillors are proud of their contribution to the school community through, for example, the creation of the 'football stadium'. They also take part in community events and nominate charities to help. They are very appreciative of the opportunities the school provides. One pupil said 'the school gives you opportunities to develop interests such as music and football'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding achievement is a consequence of the very high expectations of teachers. They plan effectively to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities and present learning in interesting and exciting ways that really motivate and stimulate them. As result, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is exemplary.

This was illustrated in a Year 6 English lesson where pupils were giving animated and informed advice to Juliet on the merits or otherwise of marrying Romeo. They clearly had a good understanding of the themes of the play and constructed reasoned and articulate arguments to support their views. Ability grouping is used very effectively in English in the juniors to support pupils at an appropriate level of challenge within the security of smaller groups. This is having a particularly positive impact on very able pupils and more are on track to reach the higher levels of attainment. The highly skilled team of teaching assistants are deployed flexibly and effectively to support pupils' learning and they make a significant contribution to the outstanding quality of teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It places a very strong emphasis on the development of pupils' basic skills in ways that recognise the needs of the school community. For example, it has designed its own literacy programme which emphasises daily sessions of reading and writing. This has had a very positive impact on standards and achievement. Pupils identified as being in danger of falling behind receive very effective additional support to enable them to catch up. The curriculum is also very successful in promoting pupils' personal development and good citizenship and high aspirations are embedded in all its work. The school provides a wide range of enrichment activities and has a proud tradition in music and sport. A 'rock' band perform at the Barnet music festival and the school has recently won awards for its initiatives on recycling and developing the school grounds, for its provision in art and for its innovative work in film making. Recent changes have created a stimulating learning environment in the Foundation Stage and ensure a smooth transition from Nursery to Reception.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and believe that their children are safe and extremely well cared for. One remarked, 'Staff are very helpful and tend to all the children's needs'. The inspector agrees that the care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. The 'Orion Way' provides a very consistent approach to behaviour management and ensures that pupils know what is expected of them, develop very positive attitudes to learning and achieve well. The effectiveness of this approach is demonstrated in the successful reintegration of a number of pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools. These pupils and others who are vulnerable are very effectively supported through the school's learning mentors and a range of outside agencies. There are very effective systems in place to track the progress of individual pupils, which are used to identify those who need extra support and to set targets to help them improve. The school is extremely committed to its families and supports them through initiatives such as the breakfast club and its 'pre-nursery' provision which involves parents and their children. As a result, parents feel confident in the school and are able to support their children's learning more effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The decision to federate the school with another local school posed considerable challenges to the leadership. The way it has risen to these challenges and continued to improve is testament to the outstanding quality of leadership and management at all levels. Governors are extremely committed to the community and have taken on a formidable task in overseeing both schools. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the Orion well but their strategies for monitoring the work of the school could be more rigorous. The headteacher's vision of raising the aspirations of its pupils is taken up enthusiastically by all leaders and staff. As a result the personal development and academic achievement of pupils is outstanding. The two deputy headteachers work very effectively together and run the school extremely well in the absence of the headteacher. Middle managers are fully involved in the monitoring and improving of teaching and learning and lead school development teams. This develops their own management skills and involves all staff in improving the school. Consequently, the school is buzzing with ideas and this has an extremely beneficial impact on the quality of education.

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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?	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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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

I am writing to thank you all for making me so welcome when I visited the school recently. I really enjoyed my time at The Orion and you all helped by being so friendly and eager to talk to me about the school. I thought you would like to know what I found out.

You are right to be very proud of your school because it is outstanding. I was really impressed with how enthusiastic you all were and bursting to tell me all the good things about the school. You should be proud of yourselves because you were very polite and extremely well behaved. You all feel safe because the staff look after you very well. I noticed how hard you all worked in lessons and how pleased you are when you become a 'star achiever'. I really enjoyed the assembly. Some of the dance moves were very impressive!

You do very well in school because lessons are interesting and you told me how the teachers help you to improve your work. Those of you who find things a little bit more difficult are given lots of help. You really like all the extra opportunities you have to take part in sport and music and many other things. By the time you move on to secondary school you reach good standards in English, mathematics and science and are very well prepared.

One of the main reasons the school is doing so well is because the headteacher is outstanding and makes sure that the school does everything it can to help you do as well as possible. All the staff work very well together to help him and they are determined to make things even better for you. I have asked them to make sure that some of you brighter pupils are helped to do even better than you are now.

Yours truly

Graham Lee

Lead inspector