

Gillespie Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100405
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	307383
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Gordon Ewing

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	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jon Goldhill
Headteacher	Mr Mark Owen
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Gillespie Road London N5 1LH
Telephone number	020 7226 6840
Fax number	020 7354 8537

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Gillespie is a one form entry primary school that is smaller than average. A wealth of different cultures and backgrounds is reflected in the diverse school population. In total some 17 different languages are spoken across the school. The main groups represented are pupils of Bangladeshi origin and those of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is high. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. One quarter of pupils have specific and moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication difficulties and behavioural and emotional difficulties. This is well above the national average. The number of pupils starting and leaving the school other than at expected times is high. Gillespie is part of the North Islington Zone an Education Improvement Partnership in North Islington. It achieved the national Healthy Schools award in 2007. The current headteacher has been in post for 2 years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Gillespie Primary is a good school. Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. Parents and pupils agree that the school has made remarkable and significant progress over the last two years because the headteacher has taken resolute and decisive action to improve standards, pupil behaviour, teaching and the progress that pupils make. As one pupil said of the school, 'It's brilliant.' The vast majority of parents agree with one parent who wrote, 'Gillespie is a wonderfully diverse and supportive school.'

Pupils' achievement is good because teaching is consistently good and pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are excellent. Consequently, pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and their attendance is steadily improving. Children enter the Nursery with below average basic skills with a significant proportion having delayed speech and language development. By the time they move to Year 1, most children are on track to achieve the learning goals expected for their age. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 2 were broadly average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. Current standards are improving because the school's clear focus on improving literacy is having a strong impact. Consequently, current Year 2 pupils are on track to achieve above average standards in writing and, although standards in reading and mathematics are below average, this represents good progress from their individual starting points. In 2007 standards achieved in Year 6 were above average in English and science and below average in mathematics. Pupils made outstanding progress in English and science and satisfactory progress in mathematics. Analysis of the under-performance of some pupils in mathematics indicates that most pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities made less consistent progress because resources to provide extra support were restricted. Current standards are improving and pupils are making good progress in English and science and satisfactory progress in mathematics. The progress now being made in mathematics by pupils with specific learning difficulties, language difficulties and behavioural and emotional difficulties is good, since closely targeted intervention by a skilful team of teachers and teaching assistants is now advancing their learning rapidly.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because a very positive ethos permeates all the school's actions encouraging pupils to learn collaboratively and to become increasingly independent. All pupils are valued as individuals and they respond very enthusiastically. They have a strong moral code, are keen to celebrate cultural diversity and share in each other's talents. They talk very confidently about how to live a healthy lifestyle and the school council has clearly led the way in establishing healthy habits through their very popular fruit stall. Through pupil and parental support the new school kitchen is a model of good practice. The economic skills developed through lessons and in well-attended extra-curricular activities help prepare them effectively for their future adult lives. Care and support are good and guidance is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good overall but the marking policy is not implemented effectively, so pupils are not consistently aware of how to take the next step in their learning and are not confident about their individual targets.

Leadership and management are good. The outstanding headteacher has drawn the whole school together creating a common purpose and a very cohesive community so that all stakeholders feel thoroughly included and involved. The headteacher's determined drive to raise standards and achievement is recognised and supported by all. Consequently, the impact of key initiatives has been remarkable over a relatively short period of time. Middle leaders are actively involved in evaluating teachers' planning and in assessing pupils' work but they are

not yet systematically monitoring the quality of teaching in lessons. Governors are well informed, committed and recognise the school's main strengths and weaknesses. They have made significant strides since the last inspection and now offer effective challenge to the school's leadership. Given its recent track record and the clear momentum for improvement, the school has a strong capacity to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching in the Foundation Stage ensures that all children make rapid progress particularly in Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy. Lessons are well planned and there is an effective balance of stimulation, care and welfare. The new outdoor area has had a marked impact on developing children's spatial learning and physical skills. In a good Nursery lesson, children were actively engaged in discussing simple measurements and used the outdoor area to participate well in practical tasks to judge who threw the furthest. The teacher developed the discussions well to extend vocabulary effectively and to work collaboratively. Staff work tirelessly to engage parents as partners and consequently, parents feel involved and hold the provision in high regard. An exciting range of activities is planned by teachers and their clear focus on developing language and communication skills as well as personal, social and emotional development is having a positive impact on children's progress. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and provides a happy and secure beginning to their education at Gillespie Primary School.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics to those levels achieved in English and science.
- Improve teachers' marking and target setting so that pupils receive more frequent and effective guidance on how to take the next step in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and standards are rising because the school has correctly focused on improving standards in literacy. Within this positive picture progress is slower in some year groups since the number of pupils joining and leaving, other than at expected times, is significantly higher. Many of these pupils have complex learning needs. Current standards throughout the school are rising particularly in English and science. However, standards in mathematics, though improving, lag behind because new initiatives to provide extra support to targeted pupils are only now bearing fruit. Early indications are that most pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language are now receiving well-targeted and consistent support so make good progress in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well being as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Cultural diversity is valued and celebrated with vigour and passion. Pupils are very reflective and have a strong sense of justice and equality. They are enthusiastic fund raisers for a range of charities including the NSPCC and Comic Relief.

Attendance is improving steadily and is now satisfactory. The school's endeavours to improve attendance and punctuality are exemplary but some parents are slow to respond to the support provided. Pupils judge that lessons and extra curricular clubs are stimulating and fun. Relationships between pupils are excellent and they collaborate very well in lessons and in recreational time. Bullying incidents are rare and all behavioural incidents are swiftly followed up and resolved. Pupils are very friendly, polite and respectful. They have a very clear understanding of healthy lifestyles and make rational choices about taking exercise and maintaining a balanced diet. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and their ability to work in teams prepare them effectively for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good through the school. This reflects the leadership's clear and determined drive to raise standards and maximise pupils' progress through improving practice in the classroom. The profile of training for teachers and teaching assistants is particularly impressive in recent years and, consequently, standards are rising and more pupils are making sustained progress. In a very effective Year 1 dance lesson, pupils learned how to build on their understanding of the story of Jack and the Beanstalk by expressing elements of the story through dance and gesture. Particularly impressive was how pupils were able to constructively comment on the performance of others and suggest areas for improvement. Resources are used well and the refurbishment of key learning areas, particularly in the Nursery and Reception classes, has had an unequivocal impact on the learning environment. Teachers are now more confident in tracking pupils' progress because targeted training and assessment procedures have been developed hand in hand. Consequently, teachers have a better understanding of how to meet individual needs and are now providing more effective challenge and stimulation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a stimulating, varied and well planned curriculum that enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in mathematics and outstanding progress in English and science. The provision for literacy, science and information and communication technology (ICT) is good and has a clear impact on the standards they achieve. Particular strengths are music and art. The whole school musical productions are impressive and actively involve many pupils in public performances. A good range of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' learning and experiences. These activities are well supported and appreciated by the pupils. Visits to museums, galleries and places of interest increase their cultural awareness and special events like Black History Month, Break The Fast and Book Week bring added colour to the curriculum and enhance learning considerably. Some parents are rightly concerned about the lack of consistent time for physical education activities though the school has plans in place to increase this later in the summer term. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is effective and well-targeted interventions are monitored closely and contribute well to the good progress they now make.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for and looked after. All adults in the school work consistently to encourage pupils to succeed and all pupils' contributions are valued. The school's excellent partnership with parents secures their commitment to their child's education and parents are very supportive of the school. One parent commented, 'This is a caring and truly inclusive school.' Clear procedures ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils are effectively met and appropriate safeguarding checks are made on all adults working within the school. Child protection and health and safety procedures are secure. Links with external agencies are well established so that pupils with specific needs are well supported within and beyond the school. The staff use rigorous systems to track individual pupil progress over time and this is increasingly effective in informing teachers about how to meet the needs of all pupils. The information gleaned is used well to set learning targets but pupils are not confident in using these targets to extend their own learning further. The recently agreed marking policy is not being implemented effectively. Teachers' marking, though accurate, does not consistently guide pupils in how to make the next step in their learning. Consequently, their understanding of how they can improve is patchy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management across the school are consistently good. The headteacher, whose leadership is outstanding, has brought about remarkable and significant changes in a relatively short period of time. He has established impressive confidence in the school across the whole community. This has led to outstanding progress being achieved in English and science. Areas of under-performance in mathematics in Key Stage 2 have been clearly identified and new initiatives have been put in place to tackle them. These include the rapid appointment of two teaching assistants specifically to improve the extra support given to pupils who need it. Early signs are that these strategies are already beginning to bear fruit. There are growing strengths in the work of subject leaders and the senior management is taking a clear lead tackling the weaker aspects of pupils' achievements. Community cohesion is good because the school has actively endeavoured to engage parents and the local community, diverse as it is, to fully participate in the corporate life of the school. Governors support the school's leadership well, know the school's strengths and weaknesses and are now more actively involved in monitoring the day to day work of the school. They are also becoming more effective in challenging the school's leadership but are not yet systematically tracking the impact of the school's actions on outcomes for pupils. The school's financial procedures were assessed by the local authority in 2007, the school achieving the Financial Management Standard in schools.

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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	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	3

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

15 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gillespie Primary School, London, N5 1LH

You will remember that we visited your school recently to see how well you and your teachers are working. We greatly appreciated the warm welcome that you gave us and were very interested to hear your views about your lessons and your school. This letter sets out what our visit told us about Gillespie Primary School.

Your school is rapidly improving and you receive a good education. Some aspects of your school are outstanding. Things that you do well are:

- you enjoy coming to school and your behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent
- your headteacher has worked hard to support staff so that your lessons are interesting, challenging and fun
- standards are rising and you are making good progress, especially in English and science
- we know that you are very safe at school and feel confident in approaching staff if you have a problem
- your personal development is outstanding because everyone at the school is a strong team and is helping you to become better learners and citizens
- the whole school, including the school council, are working tirelessly to ensure that you learn about healthy lifestyles and celebrate the cultural diversity of the school and community.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to improve your school even more by:

- raising standards further in mathematics
- setting you clear targets and marking your work carefully giving you help on how to learn even more.

We ask you to continue to concentrate in your lessons and play your part in helping your teachers to make Gillespie Primary a school of which you can be even more proud.

Kind regards

Gordon Ewing

Lead Inspector