

Ashmout Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100432
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	307388
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	291
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	55
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Barry
Headteacher	Mrs Pana McGee
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ashmout Road London N19 3BH
Telephone number	020 7272 7973
Fax number	002 7561 0943

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a primary school in Highgate with an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school is ethnically diverse. Around four in ten pupils are of White British heritage, one in ten is Black British, one in ten is Turkish or Kurdish heritage and one in ten is of mixed heritage. The remaining pupils come from a wide range of other heritages. Around a third of pupils are learning English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties is a little above average. These mostly relate to difficulties acquiring basic skills or language, speech and communication.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ashmount Primary is a good and improving school, which inspires great loyalty in its pupils and parents. Parents cannot praise the school highly enough and particularly value 'the care and thought that goes into everything that happens here'. Parents rightly emphasise just how much their children enjoy school. 'Our child looks forward to school every morning and has felt this way ever since she joined' is typical of their comments. Pupils' enjoyment is outstanding and, as a result, their behaviour is excellent, both in lessons and around the school. This is the result of the school's very good pastoral care and its successful focus on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Helping children become mature young people is a real strength and pupils' progress in acquiring and demonstrating personal and social skills is excellent.

Good teaching across the school and the lively and engaging curriculum means that pupils make good progress to achieve well. As a result, standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have improved, particularly in writing and English where, for example, more pupils are now working at higher levels. Although many pupils make good progress in mathematics, standards are still a little below average. Whilst some of this relates to slower progress in the past, expectations of progress and achievement are not yet fully consistent across the EYFS and school. The school has rightly recognised that it needs to accelerate progress in mathematics in order to reach higher standards.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has been key in improvements, which parents say have transformed the school in the past few years. There are good systems for leadership and management and clear plans to continue to enhance provision at Ashmount Primary. These assure its good capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children join the EYFS, their skills overall are below those expected of children of a similar age. They make good progress and they join Year 1 having acquired the expected skills in most areas. Children are eager to learn because the environment is stimulating and activities provide enjoyment. Skilled staff have paid particular attention to developing early speaking and listening skills as well as providing boys with opportunities to write. This has resulted in children choosing these activities as well as being eager to join in with such activities led by adults. For example, children relish opportunities to talk in inspiring role-play areas, such as the one recreating the story of the 'Gingerbread Man'. The care and attention given to children's welfare are good. As one parent wrote, 'The team have made such an effort to know and treat my child as an individual.' As a result, children settle happily and activities and procedures promote their personal development extremely well. They learn to take turns, share, and develop the confidence to make independent choices. Leadership and management are good and staff demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of young children while being very clear about their planned improvements. One of these is to ensure that their regular observations of children's progress are shared well and linked to plans to raise standards further. Visits, visitors, specialist themes, which are often planned with parents, and the exciting outdoor areas make the curriculum and learning relevant and interesting.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in mathematics by accelerating progress across the school.
- Ensure that information about children and pupils' attainments and progress is shared well between staff and used to accelerate progress, particularly in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils reach average standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' assessments show that standards in pupils' writing have improved significantly and a higher proportion of pupils are now working at higher levels. Standards at the end of Year 6 are now broadly average and have improved year-on-year since 2004. This is because pupils are making good progress, particularly in English, where successful initiatives to promote reading and writing have meant that pupils have made very good progress to overcome any previous underachievement. This is not yet fully the case in mathematics, which the school has rightly identified for further improvement. The progress of pupils is good, whatever their backgrounds, languages or particular needs or difficulties. For example, pupils with difficulties in acquiring basic skills or in language, speech and communication make good progress because of the first class care and support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary in and around the school. Pupils are welcoming and exceptionally polite to adults and to each other. This was demonstrated during a music assembly for older pupils. The atmosphere was one of mutual respect and awe as pupils played instruments and sang followed by an opportunity for reflection and a 'thought for the day'. Pupils have positive attitudes towards school, enjoy learning and participate fully in school life. Smiles are a consistent part of the daily routine and pupils' maturity and excellent personal skills means they are well prepared for their futures.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives and many are keen to do so, participating regularly in the after-school sports activities. They show a good understanding of keeping themselves and others safe. For example, pupils who have been trained as 'Playground Friends' take great care of younger pupils and take their jobs very seriously. Older pupils enjoy opportunities to take on responsibilities such as helping staff in the office at lunchtimes. Pupils are well involved in a host of local events, initiatives and fundraising activities.

The school's firm line on good attendance and punctuality has successfully reduced lateness and absence since the previous inspection although a few families still have difficulties in meeting these requirements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers create a purposeful and often exciting working environment and have very good relationships with their pupils. Pupils learn well because they enjoy their lessons a great deal and they have a clear understanding of how to improve their work further from teachers'

comments and marking. They respond very well to opportunities to work together in groups or through 'pair and share' activities which develop their thinking, language and social skills. Teachers plan effective lessons but do not always identify clearly enough how additional staff can contribute to pupils' learning. The school has noted that not all mathematics lessons provide enough opportunities for pupils to hone their basic number skills. In contrast, in outstanding mathematics lessons observed, older pupils were enthused by opportunities to quickly show what they know and have learnt and to put their knowledge into practice by solving real life problems such as working out the ideal chair height for their school tables.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The exciting curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' maturity and they relish opportunities for learning new skills through the wide range of extra activities. Opportunities to get involved in creative, sporting and artistic activities abound through the school's involvement with professional artists and performers. One notable example is the school's 'Aspirations' project which introduces children to inspiring professionals from the worlds of the arts, science and the law. Pupils also have the opportunity to learn Italian and correspond with their Italian pen pals. Pupils have good opportunities to use their language and literacy skills across subjects such as history or geography. Planned opportunities for pupils to talk about mathematics are weaker. Consequently, staff are introducing this as a focus, particularly for pupils who are learning English as an additional language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has pupils from widely differing backgrounds and provides them with pastoral and emotional support which is of uniformly high quality. The systems for promoting good behaviour encourage their excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils are delighted when their names are put forward into a weekly 'lottery' for excellent behaviour and attitudes. One parent testified to the success of this approach when she wrote that 'Since joining the school my children have become polite, respectful of each other, of their friends and of us.' The school works very successfully with a range of other agencies to meet pupils' emotional, physical and medical needs and has very strong links to support pupils' learning and well-being. Academic support and guidance is not yet as good because information about the standards pupils should be aiming for is not always consistent, and on occasions therefore, expectations are not high enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, like other aspects of the school, have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The impact of this can readily be seen in the school's steadily improving standards, progress and local reputation. Clear monitoring has contributed to the good and better teaching and learning at the school. Inspired by the dynamic headteacher, senior staff are well focused on raising standards and are beginning to contribute well to this, although some are relatively new to their posts. Governors are knowledgeable and support the school well, particularly with budgeting and furthering its plans for improving the accommodation for future pupils.

Many parents commented on the 'very good community spirit at Ashmount' and commended its harmonious and inclusive ethos. The school has excellent partnerships with local communities as well as links further afield which help pupils to develop a good understanding of communities locally and globally. Consequently community cohesion is good.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashmount Primary School, London, N19 3BH

Thank you so much for looking after all the inspectors so well when we visited your school. We did not have to worry getting lost as there was always someone offering to help us. You also told us about the things that you are so proud of and enjoy. One of the things you should be very proud of is yourselves. All the inspectors were really impressed by how you turn into such mature and thoughtful young people. This is one of the things that really pleases your parents and makes them feel that Ashmount is such a 'special place'. Perhaps Mrs McGee should put all your names in your next lottery as, without exception, you were extremely helpful, polite and friendly.

We judged that Ashmount Primary is a good school. You are making good progress in your lessons. You told us this was because your lessons are really interesting and your teachers are good. We agree with you. Your headteacher and the staff are always planning what they will improve next. This is one reason why your school keeps getting better. We have agreed that the next thing to do is to help you reach high standards in mathematics by making sure your progress is always good or better. We have also asked the school to make sure that your teachers share information and their expectations of how quickly you will make progress.

It was very kind of you to invite us to your disco. We were sorry that we were not able to come but we are sure you all had a great fun. Maybe another time.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector