

Hither Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100687
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	307440
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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)	451
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	153
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Spyros Elia
Headteacher	Ms Vicki Paterson (Executive) Ms Sarah Gorbutt (Associate)
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Beacon Road London SE13 6EH
Telephone number	020 8852 7245
Fax number	020 8852 2456

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 large multi-cultural school. The largest groups of pupils are from Black Caribbean or Black African backgrounds. Over one third have English as an additional language, which is much higher than average, and 62 pupils are at the early stages of learning English. More than double the national average are eligible for free school meals. One third of pupils have specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which are related mainly to speech, language and communication difficulties or health needs. 153 children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and attend the Nursery and Reception classes on a full time basis. The school has been awarded Healthy School status. In September 2007, the school formed a partnership with another local school whose headteacher is the executive headteacher of both schools. In addition, Hither Green has an associate headteacher. There is an after-school club on the school premises managed by a private provider.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hither Green is a satisfactory school. It is improving rapidly and has some good features because of the outstanding leadership of the executive headteacher. The associate headteacher and the deputy support her very effectively. Together they form a strong team that is successfully and relentlessly driving forward school improvement. One parent wrote, 'I think the school has been very good in tackling various issues and very quickly too.'

The partnership with a local school is having a significant impact on securing improvement and shared expertise for pupils and staff. Improvements have lifted the school from its fragile and declining position in the years after the previous inspection. A legacy of substantial underachievement has been stemmed, pupils are making increasingly better progress and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Overall provision, achievement and pupils' personal development and well-being are now satisfactory. Given the starting points a year ago, this demonstrates good leadership and management, including from the governing body, and a good capacity to improve further. One parent expressed the views of many with the comment, 'I am very pleased with the developments made within the school. Good strong leadership which I hope continues and remains consistent.'

Standards are below average overall and pupils' achievement, given their very low starting points is satisfactory. In the 2008 tests, pupils did better than in previous years with more reaching the expected levels as a result of better teaching and a sharper focus on identifying pupils who needed extra support, and providing it. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment is increasing but remains below that found nationally. This is because the work set for them has not always been sufficiently challenging and expectations are not always high enough. Improvement in the breadth of the curriculum, more opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning and an expanded range of visits and visitors to school are increasing pupils' enjoyment and interest in their learning. Pupils say they learn most when they are allowed to find things out for themselves and lessons involve investigations and problem solving activities, which promote independence and thinking skills. However, opportunities for learning in this way are inconsistent across the school and sometimes work is not well matched to pupils' needs. Leaders recognise that teaching and learning need to be better if they are to raise standards from below average more rapidly. The whole school is rightly focusing on improving writing and mathematics for all pupils, because standards are particularly low in these areas.

The procedures to ensure the inclusion of pupils from a range of backgrounds, some of whom have complex learning, emotional or physical needs, those learning English and new arrivals at the school are managed well. As a result, they make similarly satisfactory progress to others because of the inclusive ethos and the extra help provided for them. The good quality of the school's care and pastoral support means pupils have satisfactory personal skills, including their understanding of how to keep fit and live a healthy lifestyle. They feel safe at school. Behaviour is satisfactory and pupils respond positively to the new behaviour policy that is helping them to be more responsible for their actions. Teachers ensure that any inappropriate behaviour does not adversely affect the learning of others. There are good systems established to safeguard pupils. Learning mentors and other staff provide good support for vulnerable pupils and those who need someone to turn to. Good links with a range of other schools and agencies make a good contribution to pupils' well-being. Pupils do not always have clear targets for their learning or enough information to know how they can do better. Work is marked regularly, but does

not always give pupils useful information to enable them to know how well they are doing or how they can improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start the EYFS in the Nursery with attainment that is very much lower than is expected. All adults work well together to provide a happy and safe environment for children to learn. A carefully planned and welcoming start to Nursery enables most children to settle quickly and follow their new routines. Through sensitive interventions many children develop the necessary personal skills. In both Nursery and Reception, there is the right balance of adult led activities and those that children undertake independently. However, staff do not always provide sufficient encouragement to develop the youngest children's spoken language. Although children often enjoy the activities they chose for themselves, those in the Nursery are not always sharply focused and children do not always gain as much as they could from them. Children therefore usually make satisfactory progress.

In the Reception classes, adults build well on children's skills and knowledge, and teaching is good. Children make good progress because all adults have high expectations, provide focused and stimulating activities and continually model good language. This is a significant improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Attainment at the end of the EYFS has been improving over the last few years but remains well below expectations, especially in communication, language and literacy. Leaders have accurately identified that the lack of a covered outdoor area limits children's learning. Assessment information is helping to plan work for children of different abilities and identify children with additional needs but does not consistently identify what children should do next. The school establishes satisfactory links with parents at the start of the school year. The school's leadership team has a clear picture of the strengths of its provision and where improvement is still needed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the good practice seen in some lessons in order to raise the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Raise standards in writing and mathematics.
- Increase pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work through better marking and target setting.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From their very low starting points, good and sometimes better progress is increasingly evident for many pupils. Improvements in teaching are helping to eradicate previous underachievement and pupils are beginning to 'catch up' in their learning. In the 2008 national tests for Year 6, provisional results were broadly in line with last year's national average in science, but below the previous averages in English and mathematics. The Year 6 results in English and science were an improvement from 2007, although mathematics had declined. There was a similar picture at the end of Year 2 with improved standards from 2007 in reading and writing, but

not in mathematics. The school is increasing the opportunities for problem solving, investigational work and mental mathematics, as these are the areas where weaknesses hold pupils back. More opportunities for writing are now planned into the curriculum, as standards are not as high as those in reading. Improved tracking and systems of assessment are now enabling teachers to direct support to pupils who most need it.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Attendance has improved which demonstrates that pupils are enjoying coming to school more than in the past. Pupils know how to behave appropriately and keep safe and most do so, both in lessons and around the school. A very small minority of pupils have very challenging behaviour but respond well to support and sanctions. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding about working in a community and readily accept responsibility. They have a satisfactory awareness of the need to live a healthy lifestyle through a balanced diet and physical activity. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. Their cultural development is good because they are considerate and accepting of differences in others' social, religious and cultural backgrounds. Improving standards in basic skills are helping to prepare pupils adequately for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has improved and is all at least satisfactory with some that is good. Most lessons are well paced with clear expectations of what is to be learnt. Better lessons are interesting and fun and teachers' enthusiasm and expertise inspire learning. However, there are not yet enough of such lessons across the school to thoroughly enliven learners, and lift all learning from satisfactory to good. Pupils respond well to being actively involved in lessons. Assessment, marking and target setting are not sufficiently linked to enable all pupils to know how they can improve. Teachers do not always make effective use of assessment information to plan the next steps in learning. In some lessons, teachers pose good questions to encourage pupils to give extended responses, improving their speaking, language, and thinking and communication skills. This is not consistent in all lessons. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of learning and achievement for all of their pupils. Pupils are particularly motivated and inspired by the use of interactive whiteboards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is aware that a very narrow curriculum in the past hindered pupils' enjoyment and achievement. A new approach to curriculum planning is developing greater links between subjects to add meaning and interest to pupils' learning. This includes introducing more practical work. For example, in mathematics, pupils were creating bar charts on their favourite toys. French and philosophy lessons are now part of the curriculum, which help to promote pupils' thinking skills and interest. The school's programme for social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) contributes well to pupils' personal development. There is a good range of visiting performers and specialists. Recent examples include theatre groups, an African drummer, a children's novelist and storyteller and a mathematician. These, along with visits to places of

interest, enhance pupils' enjoyment and provide more stimuli to pupils' writing. In the last year there has been a significant increase in the range of clubs offered to pupils that enriches the curriculum well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Attendance and punctuality have improved as a result of the school's rigorous procedures to monitor attendance and follow up absences, as well as the positive contribution made by learning mentors. Despite this good practice, a small number of parents still keep their children off school unnecessarily and this affects their progress. Pastoral care is good. Procedures, including safeguarding and child protection arrangements are robust and meet statutory requirements. One parent wrote, 'The teachers care about the children's overall welfare not just about their academic progress. I feel my children are well looked after and they are safe.' There is satisfactory academic guidance for pupils. Feedback and marking about how well they are doing is inconsistent and marking does not always inform pupils about what they can do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The work of the senior leadership team has brought about stability to a school that has gone through a period of great turbulence in recent years. When the executive headteacher came to the school, weaker areas were quickly identified and addressed through good consultation with pupils, staff, parents and governors, and a good working partnership with the local authority. Parents are positive about the school. One wrote, 'I feel new management has brought in some good changes.' New responsibilities have been given to middle managers, subject leaders and class teachers so that leadership is shared in teams of key staff. As a result, leaders are undertaking more accountability for their areas. There is an increased emphasis on their professional development and several staff commented that, as a result, they feel valued and inspired. Governance is good. The chair of governors leads the governing bodies of both partnership schools, which strengthens the links, and enhances the positive outcomes of the partnership.

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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?	3
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 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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

03 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hither Green Primary School, London, SE13 6EH

I am writing to thank you for making me and my colleagues so welcome when we visited your school. Thank you for talking to us about your learning and telling us what you think about your school. We were very pleased to see how polite you are. We appreciated your cheery 'good mornings' and the help you gave us to find our way around the building. Your school is satisfactory and has improved a lot over the last year. There is still more to do to make it even better.

These are the things we think are best about your school.

- You appreciate all the extra activities and events the staff provide for you.
- You respect each other's differences and you get on well with everyone whatever their backgrounds or beliefs.
- You know how to stay healthy and safe.
- Everyone in the school cares for you very well.
- The school works well with people outside of the school to help you all do your best.
- Congratulations for coming to school more regularly, keep this up.
- Your headteachers, deputy and the governors do a very good job in running the school.

We want the school to work on the following important things.

- Help you to improve your writing skills and your learning in mathematics.
- We have asked your teachers to make sure they help you know how well you are doing in your lessons and how you can improve your learning.
- Make sure that all of your lessons are as good as the best ones to help you learn as well as you can.

Thank you again for all your help and for being so friendly and interesting to talk to. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead Inspector