

John Stainer Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100689
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	307441
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Debbie Berrill
Headteacher	Ms Sue Riddle-Harte
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Mantle Road Brockley London SE4 2DY
Telephone number	020 7639 0482
Fax number	020 7732 8875

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

John Stainer Primary serves a very mixed community that includes some areas where there are very high levels of deprivation. Just over a quarter of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The next largest groups include pupils from Black Caribbean, Black African and Asian heritages. A high number of pupils speak English as an additional language and, of these, a significant proportion are at a very early stage of using English when they join the school. Many pupils have not attended this school for their entire primary education. A significant number join and leave the school at unexpected times throughout the school year. Over a third of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. A high number of vulnerable pupils attend the school. The school has achieved the Healthy School Status, the Clean and Green Gold Award, Sports Mark and is in the fourth cycle of Investors in People. They are currently working to gain the information and communication technology (ICT) mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

John Stainer is a flourishing school. Inspectors agree with the words of one parent who said, 'The hard work of the staff, governors, children and parents make it a positive and exciting learning environment.' The headteacher shows outstanding leadership and is driving John Stainer School forward very well. The headteacher took over the school at a time when it was in Special Measures and led it to become a satisfactory school in 2004. In 2006, the school was recognised as the third most improved school in the country. The school now provides a good education, with outstanding features in pupils' personal development and care. The school has a good capacity to improve and leaders are ambitious to make the school outstanding in the future.

The leadership team, which includes middle managers and governors, provides good leadership and, as a result, pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress from their often very low starting points. Progress is not yet outstanding because the pace at which pupils develop skills is uneven from year to year.

Teaching and learning are good overall but not consistent in all year groups. The quality ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Leaders accurately recognise what needs to be done to make the quality of teaching and learning more even and have started work on this. They know that younger pupils are not being taught how to link letters and sounds (phonics) well enough to help them with their reading and writing. Work has started on this but there is still more to do. Leaders also know that, in a few lessons, a few lower ability pupils are not given suitably challenging work to do and they are checking this carefully. Nonetheless, pupils with learning difficulties make good overall progress. Pupils' difficulties often relate to dyslexia, behavioural and emotional difficulties, speech and language problems or sensory impairment. They do well because they benefit from strong additional support and especially successful links with outside agencies.

At the time of the last inspection, standards in pupils' work were the main area for improvement, especially in English. Standards rose sharply between 2004 and 2006 and were average. However, they fell to below average in 2007 and were exceptionally low in English. This was due to small numbers in the year group, the complex needs of over a third of the class and the fact that very high numbers of pupils joined or left the class when this group were in Years 4, 5 and 6. Standards are on track to improve considerably in 2008 by the end of Year 6.

Pupils are delightful, very polite and welcoming. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The care given to new arrivals is exemplary. Excellent systems are in place to make sure that pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils gain a very wide range of important skills for their future lives and they thoroughly enjoy learning. In particular, pupils are helped to have high aspirations. For example, older pupils thought about the kind of jobs that they would like to do in order to be, 'Like an eagle, destined to reach sublime heights'. They have a very good knowledge of how to be safe, fit and healthy. The partnership with parents is very strong. Parents have considerable confidence in the school, although a few would like their views to be listened to more.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's skills and knowledge are significantly lower than is usually expected when they start school in the Nursery. They make good progress in their personal, physical and creative development. They also make good progress in widening their knowledge of the world around them. Children gain confidence and skills in speaking however, the teaching of reading and writing has weaknesses. This is because the teaching of phonics is not yet robust enough. By the end of their time in the Foundation Stage, standards, although improved, are still below average, with only a third of children reaching the expected level in their language and communication skills. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The activities provided are mostly interesting, provide adequate challenge and help children to enjoy school. Relationships are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop teachers' and assistants' skills in teaching how to link letters and sounds, especially for children from the Foundation Stage through to Year 2.
- Make sure that pupils are always given suitably challenging activities, especially the lower ability pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils from all backgrounds do well. This includes the pupils who are very new to the school. Leaders have been working well to raise the achievement of boys, especially through special writing projects. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress due to the specialist teaching, strong focus on discussion work and effective use of resources in lessons.

Standards vary between average and below average, because of pupils very low starting points, and variations between year groups. The school's own assessment information and samples of lessons and work seen confirm that standards are on track to be much higher in 2008 than they were in 2007 although standards may continue to vary. For the following year, a high proportion of the group are recent entrants and many have exceptionally low skills or are new to speaking English. Pupils currently in Years 3 and 4, show at least average skills and a substantial proportion are working at an even higher level.

The school has been working successfully to raise standards by the end of Year 2. Improved teaching resulted in a rapid rise in standards in 2007 but there is still more to be done to lift these to average. Leaders have begun helping pupils to develop better basic reading and writing skills but there is still more to do.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that it is fun. They quickly develop positive attitudes, and emotional maturity, whilst in the Foundation Stage. Pupils are growing into very good citizens who have high aspirations and are extremely well behaved. Racist and bullying behaviour is virtually unknown. Pupils are very aware of world events and there is a very high degree of cultural and religious respect, as evident in the Holocaust Memorial Day presentation. A very

good range of clubs, regular exercise and healthy eating initiatives has resulted in pupils adopting healthy and fit lifestyles very well. Pupils know how to be safe and talk about such things as the dangers of drugs. The many interesting activities, such as attempting a world record for singing, or working with local councillors to improve the environment, show an excellent commitment to the community. Although pupils make good progress in their basic skills, younger pupils are not doing as well as they could in their reading and writing. Nevertheless, their positive attitudes mean they are well prepared for their future lives, in school and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Parents accurately comment on the 'positive and exciting learning environment' that the school provides. Very good displays of pupils' work show teachers' high expectations and help pupils to feel proud of their work and effort. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour consistently well. Teachers' enthusiasm for teaching often engages pupils' own excitement and interest. Teachers make the most of opportunities to talk to pupils and develop their speaking skills very well. Work is usually suitably planned for pupils' wide ranging needs and there has been a good recent focus on challenging the higher ability pupils. However, this is not consistent in all year groups. Lower ability pupils are sometimes given work that is either too easy or too difficult and teaching assistants are not always directed well enough in how to help this group. There are missed opportunities for younger pupils to write and read as often as possible and the teaching phonics is not rigorous enough to support this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum contributes exceptionally well to many aspects of pupils' personal development and is well supported by a good range of clubs and visits and excellent links with the community. Links between subjects are good and this makes learning fun and meaningful for pupils. The school has implemented several initiatives to aid learning in English. Older pupils, in Years 3 to 6, are enjoying more challenging reading activities and they are encouraged to edit and extend their writing more. This is also developing in Years 1 and 2, but is not consistent enough. The teaching of music is very high quality, as was evident when pupils played 'Lambada' on the steel pans and when the voice club sang 'Something Inside So Strong'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is excellent and enhanced by the outstanding management of this aspect of provision. There are excellent links with outside agencies, which especially aid the care and support of pupils with learning difficulties and vulnerable pupils. The initiatives to support pupils with speech and language problems are highly effective and this helps them to overcome barriers for learning. Vulnerable pupils have outstanding care, with prompt identification and very effective support. Pupils' health, safety and emotional well-being are taken very seriously. Pupils' attendance is outstanding because of the staff's many efforts to discourage absence and make the school a fun place to be. The very good behaviour management strategy has led to no exclusions in six years. The anger management group is very good, helping pupils to explore their feelings and find strategies to overcome potential conflicts. As one pupil put it,

'The teachers are really helpful and I am grateful'. Very well trained staff and 'play supporter' pupils make playtime safe and happy. The academic guidance given to pupils is good. As one pupil remarked, 'We have targets for everything - but only if we need them.' Helpful marking of pupils' work guides them in how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers form a strong team who are focused on helping pupils to achieve well. Standards, although variable from year to year, are on track to rise in most year groups in the future. Leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress well. The headteacher is very skilled in doing this, with middle managers still developing their skills. Leaders quickly identify and support pupils that have made slower progress. The school's assessments show that there is improving performance for higher ability pupils and for boys, which demonstrates leaders' high expectations. Target setting is very ambitious and realistic. The school's development plan focuses well on improving many aspects of the school's work. There is a good emphasis on English, especially for older pupils, but there is not enough priority given to the development of phonics. Governors provide good support; they know the school well and are leading developments effectively. The headteacher is the driving force behind the school and her leadership is excellent.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	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.

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	1
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

11 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Stainer Community Primary School, London, SE4 2DY

You may remember that two school inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

You go to a good school. It does many things especially well and there are only a few things that need to be done to improve. Your headteacher and all of the other adults are working very hard to make the school as special as possible for you. Your teachers give you many exciting activities, which make learning fun. You work hard and make good progress in learning new things. Clearly, you enjoy coming to school. This is evident in your excellent attendance and behaviour. Congratulations! Please keep this up. I was very impressed by the anger management group, play supporters' work and the respect that you show for others. Keep up the very good community work, such as your excellent endeavours to make the area more litter free.

The adults care for you very well and help you to learn many important skills for the future. Your school is working well to help as many of you as possible to get to the level that we expect in English, mathematics and science. In most years, you are on track with this. There are still some things to do to make sure that teachers help you to do as well as possible. We agree with your headteacher that the school needs to work on:

- helping the younger children to get even better at using their letters and sounds to help them with their reading, writing and spelling
- make sure that activities in lessons are just right for all of you, especially some of you who find learning more difficult.

Thank you for welcoming us so politely to your school. Also, many congratulations for your superb musical work. The way that you played 'Lambada' on the steel pans and sang 'Something Inside So Strong' was very special.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector