

# John Ball Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100709
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lewisham
<b>Inspection number</b>	307452
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wendy Simmons

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	456
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Maria Nash
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Hilary Pam
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 December 2004
<b>School address</b>	Southvale Road Blackheath London SE3 0TP
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 8521601
<b>Fax number</b>	0208 3184022

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how the school is improving writing from Foundation Stage through to the end of Year 2, especially for higher ability pupils
- how the school is developing the curriculum for the most able and talented pupils
- how the new initiatives for managing pupils' behaviour are helping pupils to behave well.

The inspector gained evidence from lessons and from the school's own evaluations of its work. Discussions were held with staff and pupils. A range of documentation was evaluated. Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised and the views of parents were gathered from questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

John Ball Primary is a particularly large primary school that serves a very diverse community. Pupils come from an extremely wide range of social and cultural backgrounds. A quarter of all pupils receive free school meals, an above average proportion. Just under a half of all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The next largest groups include pupils from Black Caribbean, Black African and mixed heritage backgrounds. There are also significant numbers from other White backgrounds. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils' problems mostly relate to dyslexia, communication or behaviour difficulties. A high proportion of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. The school has several awards including: Artsmark Gold; the Quality Mark for standards of pupils' work; the Activemark and, a community cycling award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

John Ball Primary is an outstanding and happy school. The school rightly deserves its reputation as being culturally and socially inclusive. As one pupil put it, 'You can make friends, everyone is friendly and there are lots of fun activities.' Overall, parents have considerable confidence in the school. They note such things as the school having a '...wonderful sense of community'.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding because they do very well overall in both their academic and personal development. In particular, staff skilfully unlock pupils' potential, which helps them to blossom. Pupils gain an excellent range of skills that prepare them very well for their lives. Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. From Years 3 to 6, pupils make outstanding progress. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average. From pupils' low starting points, this represents excellent progress. In 2007, the school performed in the top 2% of schools nationally for adding value to its pupils' attainment. This is exceptionally impressive. Standards may not be quite as high in 2008 as they were in 2007. This is largely because more pupils have complex learning needs. Nonetheless, their progress is still outstanding in the light of their starting points.

The achievement of different groups of learners is very good overall. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties do outstandingly well. This is because teachers place an excellent emphasis on discussion work and give very high quality support. Pupils from different cultural backgrounds make similar outstanding overall progress. Almost all pupils reach the expected level (Level 4) and a high proportion gain the higher level (Level 5).

Leaders are constantly looking for ways to improve. They want higher ability pupils to do even better, as their progress, although good, is not yet as impressive as other groups. Leaders have improved the curriculum by introducing such things as debating and special focus group activities. These are helpful initiatives, which motivate and challenge pupils. However, leaders have correctly identified that the most able pupils, especially boys, in Years 1 and 2 do not reach their full potential in writing. Teachers help pupils to have exciting reasons to write. However, opportunities for them to extend, modify and improve their writing are underdeveloped. This makes it difficult for more pupils to work on the higher skills (Level 3). Some pupils, especially boys, often find it hard to write quickly. The school has plans in place to introduce joined handwriting in Key stage 1, to address this issue.

The headteacher, deputy and assistant headteacher form a very strong team and their leadership is outstanding. They are driving the school forward with energy and determination and this positively affects pupils' achievement. They know the needs of the pupils well and carefully track their progress. They are making innovative changes to the way that they use computer data to help them with this. Leaders regularly evaluate the work of the school with pupils, staff and parents. Self-evaluation is very good, although a few parents noted that they would still like their views to be considered more. The senior leadership team are well supported by governors and other staff. There is a clear sense of purpose amongst staff.

Overall, outstanding teaching contributes much to pupils' progress. Teachers and assistants are very skilled overall. They have high expectations and plan lessons well. Teachers know how pupils learn to best effect and ensure that activities are fun. They encourage pupils to think, explore things for themselves and show their initiative. An excellent range of visits and well-established links with the community widen learning opportunities. Teaching by specialist

and visiting staff deepens pupils' skills, as evident in the arts and sports activities. The superb links with drama and exciting discussions enable pupils to understand complex ideas. This was evident in pupils' sensitive writing about characters in La Boheme and in the way that they explored historical facts and emotions when finding out about Boudicca.

Opportunities for the arts and extra-curricular activities are impressive and contribute much to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils perform enthusiastically in the African drumming group and rock band and make a very positive contribution to the school and wider community. Pupils adopt very good attitudes to fitness and health. The outstanding cycling initiative has resulted in around 50 pupils cycling to school on a daily basis.

The excellent pastoral care helps pupils to feel safe and well looked after. However, pupils commented that they would like better toilet facilities. The inspector and headteacher agree. The school is shortly to take action to improve this.

Following consultation with pupils, staff and parents, leaders have worked hard with the staff to implement successfully a new behaviour management system. This was much needed, as some pupils' behaviour had previously disrupted lessons. The new behaviour policy is very effective and helps almost all pupils to behave well overall. Pupils now rarely disturb the learning of others. As one pupil put it, 'If anyone gets out of hand, they are properly dealt with now.' While another said, 'Teachers really listen if you get upset and I don't bring my anger into the classroom anymore.'

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

When children join the Nursery, their skills and knowledge are extremely wide ranging. Some pupils are very able, lively and chatty individuals whilst many others find it hard to socialise and have very limited communication skills. On balance, children's skills and knowledge are lower than is usually expected for their age when they start school. They make good progress because teaching is rooted in very strong early years practice. The very wide range of interesting activities allows children to explore things for themselves, enjoy learning and develop very important social and communication skills. By the end of the Reception Year, children can do most of the things that are usually expected for their age. There is an increasing focus on helping children to learn letters and sounds, (phonics), which is helping standards to rise in reading. In this aspect, there is good challenge for the most able pupils. However, writing activities sometimes lack challenge. Children quickly gain good counting and calculation skills.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Help pupils, especially the most able, to develop their writing skills better between the Foundation Stage and Year 2.

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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?	1
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

27 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Ball Primary School, London, SE3 0TP

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

You go to an outstanding school. This means that many things are very impressive and very little needs improving. Your headteacher, her deputy and the assistant headteacher, together with all of the other adults, are working very hard. They are making the school very successful and you are helping by working hard and being enthusiastic learners. Your teachers give you many exciting activities, which make learning fun and I know that you like this. Some of your English work is very good, especially your work on The Magic Box, Boudicca and La Boheme. Your teachers work very hard to help you learn many new things quickly and well. You value the many clubs, activities and visits and I was thrilled to hear the African Drums and Rock Group. Your art work is very impressive and this helps you to be creative. Please keep up your good behaviour, as the new behaviour system is working very well and I know that you like this. The adults care for you very well. Your teachers are helping you to get to the level that we expect in English, mathematics and science and many of you do even better than this by working at Level 5. I greatly enjoyed seeing some of you developing your debating skills.

I agree with you and Ms Pam, your headteacher, that the toilets are not as nice as they should be. These are soon to be improved. This is a huge job, as the drains need major work. Your headteacher assures me that immediate action will be taken to try to freshen up the smell and give you nicer soap to use.

To make the school even better for you I have asked the adults to:

- help those of you who find learning easy, in Years 1 and 2, to work on your writing skills and help all of you in those year groups to learn how to do joined up handwriting as soon as you are ready for this.

Keep up your fitness, especially through your excellent cycling!

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector