

Robert Browning Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100809
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	307491
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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	338
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Gordon
Headteacher	Karen McBride
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2005
School address	King and Queen Street Walworth London SE17 1DQ
Telephone number	020 7708 3456
Fax number	020 7703 9830

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school, with a Nursery is situated in the inner city. Most pupils are from a wide range of ethnic minority backgrounds, the largest group being Black African. Almost half the pupils speak an additional language to English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. Almost a third of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, which is above average. Most of these have moderate learning or speech and language difficulties. A large number of pupils join and leave the school outside normal times. The school has an award for promoting healthy lifestyles. There was a period of rapid staff turnover at a senior level before the appointment of the present headteacher and the deputy head. The assistant headteacher joined the leadership team in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This rapidly improving school provides a satisfactory level of education for all its pupils. The headteacher has a passion for education. She has built up a strong leadership team, who share her vision for school improvement. Standards have improved in the past year and are now below average rather than exceptionally low. Staff are working hard to raise these still further, as they accept that there is some way still to go. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, with some good achievement in the Foundation Stage and in Year 6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and more, good or better lessons are being observed. However, there is insufficient good teaching to ensure that all pupils achieve consistently well. The school's good creative curriculum is effective in engaging and interesting pupils. This contributes well to their good personal development and well-being, and to their enjoyment of school.

Parents welcome the improvements they have seen with the establishment of the new senior leadership team. One said, 'I am a proud parent of the school and believe that my children will benefit from the school'. The headteacher has brought stability and the deputy head and the new assistant headteacher support her very well. Together they have formed an accurate view of the school's strengths and where it needs to develop further. Appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified.

Pupils behave well and show respect for one another. One commented, 'It's a real community, people help each other. We learn about different cultures from each other'. They have a good understanding of living healthy lifestyles, for example in knowing why it is important to eat breakfast. They feel safe at school and free from bullying. The school council makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school, for example in leading fund-raising efforts for charity. Pupils support one another well as playground buddies and take on a good range of other responsibilities. Attendance is below average, mainly due to a spate of sickness among the Reception children, but the school has good measures in place to reduce absence. Pupils learn to be independent and grow in confidence. They do not yet acquire the expected basic skills by the time they leave the school.

A pupil said, 'The best thing about this school is learning'. Teachers know pupils well and involve them as much as they can. There is a much stronger focus on measuring pupils' progress and identifying early those who need additional support. A good range of interventions help pupils to catch up if they are falling behind. There are some inconsistencies in marking, which does not always show pupils how they can improve. Not all assessments of how well pupils are doing are accurate, which means it is harder to determine how successful any support has been, or plan work that appropriately challenges pupils. Senior leaders have put in place training to help make such judgements more reliable.

The care, guidance and support pupils receive are satisfactory, although pastoral support is good, especially for those pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The impact of leadership and management is judged to be satisfactory, as it is too soon to see the full effect of some of the changes they have introduced. Leaders are well supported by governors, who hold the school to account well. There is a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There is good provision in the Foundation Stage, with some outstanding practice in the Nursery, where children get off to an excellent start. Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities well below those normally expected, especially in their personal and social development and in their language and communication. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, although most do not attain the expected early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Staff have a very good understanding of the needs of young children, and make the activities exciting and fun to capture the children's imaginations. The Nursery is spacious with its own outdoor play area, but the Reception classes are cramped and have no dedicated access to the outside. This restricts the extent to which staff can involve children in a full range of outdoor activities, although they manage well within the constraints that exist. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well, and careful and accurate assessments are kept of children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science by ensuring even more of the teaching is good or better.
- Improve the consistency of marking and the reliability of assessments to enable the impact of support to be measured accurately.
- Ensure the accommodation for the Reception children is adequate and includes a designated outdoor play area.

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

In the 2007 national tests, standards improved by the end of Year 2 to below average, but were exceptionally low in Year 6. Current standards in English, mathematics and science are below average across the school, but pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Achievement is better in Year 6 as a result of consistently good teaching, and these pupils are on track to meet challenging targets. The pupils with moderate learning difficulties are supported well and make satisfactory progress towards the individual targets that are set for them. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress as a result of the good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the music and art of other cultures. Working alongside visiting artists and musicians, they have produced some high quality work. Pupils take plenty of exercise both in school and through a good range of sports clubs, and know about the dangers of smoking and using illegal drugs. They have established good links with local market traders and are planting their own orchard to improve the environment and produce their own fruit. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. One pupil said, 'I wouldn't say we are perfect, but we do try our hardest'. Pupils take part in a project called 'We Can Do It' to develop their business

enterprise skills, and work together as partners and in teams. Their basic skills are improving but are not yet in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching of writing has improved, with more opportunities provided for extended writing and a greater focus on drama and role-play. Year 3 pupils produced excellent poems following a trip down the nearby River Thames, one of which included the line, 'under us unexpectedly we see dirty murky water'. Teachers make learning fun and keep pupils active, using a range of strategies to hold their attention. Occasionally the pace slows because pupils are unclear about what they have to do, or because the work is not sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Teaching assistants support individual pupils well and often provide valuable help to groups. Sometimes teachers do not give them clear enough guidance to make the most of the learning opportunities for all the pupils in the group.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils respond well to the school's creative curriculum, which links subjects together in imaginative ways. Its emphasis on practical activities and the use of visual aids particularly benefits pupils who speak English as an additional language and those pupils with speech and learning difficulties. Good links with external organisations, such as theatre groups, artists and musicians, enhance the curriculum and enable pupils to enjoy a wide range of educational experiences. Working with a sculptor, for example, Year 3 and 4 pupils soldered pieces of metal together to create insect sculptures. Other pupils worked with pupils from a nearby special school to learn robotic dancing. The school offers a full range of clubs, including Spanish, and Caribbean dancing. At present, there is no school library, and the quality of classroom libraries varies, meaning that in some cases opportunities to celebrate and promote reading are diminished.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The caring ethos of the school ensures that pupils feel safe and enjoy their education. The learning mentors support pupils with emotional difficulties well. The school provides a good range of services, such as lunchtime clubs to teach social skills and raise self-esteem, meeting a variety of needs. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils know their targets and have useful discussions with teachers about their progress. There is some inconsistency in how well marking helps pupils to find the next steps for learning, and in the reliability of some of the assessments of their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership, ably supported by the deputy head and assistant headteacher. Their rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, together with effective support

for staff, means that provision is improving. Regular meetings are held to consider pupils' progress and to agree plans for accelerating it. A teacher commented, 'I feel I have greater ownership of the children's learning because I know exactly what they need to do next'. Other subject leaders are taking more responsibility for their areas, although, for some, this is at an early stage. The impact of recent changes is evident in higher standards and better teaching, which are contributing to pupils' satisfactory progress.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Robert Browning Primary School, London, SE17 1DQ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. Yours is a satisfactory school and is getting better all the time. Here are some of things we like about it.

- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- The standard of your work is improving.
- You behave well and look after one another.
- Lessons are fun and keep you busy.
- You have lots of opportunities to write well.
- The school cares for you well and you have a good understanding about how to stay healthy and keep safe.
- There are lots of clubs and visits for you to enjoy.
- The headteacher leads the school well and is making a difference.

We are pleased that you are learning steadily, but we want you to all benefit from the best teaching. We have asked your teachers to help you to improve even more and think it would be useful if marking always showed you what you needed to do next, and for teachers to be really clear about how well you are doing. We know they would value your thoughts about what helps you to learn. The children in the Reception classes have quite small rooms and it is difficult for them to get outside to play. We would like to see them having more space, and somewhere that is easy for them to reach outdoors, so that they can spend more time out there.

Thank you once again for your help. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr. N. Butt

Lead Inspector