

Virginia Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100926
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307526
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Smith

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	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Wendy Birkby
Headteacher	Mr Clive Davies (Acting) / Mrs Janet Sheehan (Interim)
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2004
School address	Virginia Road Bethnal Green London E2 7NQ
Telephone number	020 7739 6195
Fax number	020 7739 1685

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This slightly below average sized primary school provides for pupils who primarily come from the Bangladeshi community and are of the Muslim faith. A much larger than average number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The pupils join and leave the school much more frequently than usual. The number of pupils with speech and language, moderate learning difficulties or disabilities, is slightly below average, although the proportion who have a statement of special educational need is higher than average. An acting headteacher has been in place for nearly a year and an interim headteacher has been supporting the school for two terms.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for pupils and works hard to support the needs of its community. The leadership of the interim headteacher is inspirational and she has high expectations. Importantly, she has ensured there is now a clearer vision for improvement that puts pupils' achievement and the raising of standards firmly at the top of the agenda. School initiatives are beginning to take hold resulting in improved provision and practice. This is positively enhancing pupils' achievement and personal development. For example, in many areas, the monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress is now being effectively analysed to identify pupil underachievement and initiate support strategies. However, this information is not yet being used consistently by teachers to ensure there is sufficient progression and challenge in pupils' learning. Whole school evaluation and monitoring of provision is now effective and the school knows what it has to do to improve. However, as yet, there are insufficient opportunities for all managers to take full responsibility for monitoring pupils' achievement across the school. This results in an uneven picture of pupils' progress across all subjects.

The school has outstanding partnerships with external providers and parents that ensure pupils' well-being is fully supported. The school makes very successful efforts to support the diverse needs of the ever-changing school population. Parents recognise the school's commitment to including all pupils, and are very happy with the support that they and their children receive. One parent, reflecting the views of many reported, 'I am very happy with the education the school is providing for my children and the progress they are making.'

The Foundation Stage Unit offers very good provision that ensures children get the best possible start to their education. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. Children move into Year 1 with literacy and social skills similar to those expected nationally. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6 they reach average standards, representing satisfactory achievement. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties and pupils needing additional help with their English make good progress because of the effective support they receive.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but improving. Relationships are excellent, resulting in pupils behaving well and having positive attitudes. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively by most teachers to support learning, although pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to reinforce their skills across the curriculum. Such inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, and occasional lack of challenge results in uneven progress for some pupils. The curriculum has focused on improving pupils' core skills in English and mathematics and the emphasis on writing has resulted in improved standards across the school. The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good. Academic guidance is good, and in lessons pupils are very clear about how to improve their work. Pupils are polite, friendly and naturally inquisitive and understand well about healthy living and how to keep safe. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show empathy and support for each other. Their involvement in the community is outstanding and contributes very well to establishing strong teamwork in the school. The governing body is fully involved in the monitoring, self-evaluation and strategic management of the school, and clearly know the school well. Leadership and management are clearly improving and have a positive impact on pupil achievement. The very recent results in national tests show the successful impact that interventions have had in raising achievement and standards. The outlook is very positive,

although the capacity to improve is only satisfactory until opportunities are maximized for all leaders and managers to take responsibility for pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills lower than those expected for their age, especially in aspects of language and social development. The new area is stimulating, very well resourced and children make good progress. Children become independent learners. There is a strong focus on speaking and listening supported by effective staff modelling. Detailed assessments lead to accurate analysis of the next teaching steps required for each child. Very good liaison with parents means that they feel fully involved. The provision is very well led and managed and the school has identified the need to ensure better continuity in learning between Reception and Year 1 to further enhance provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teachers consistently use available data on pupils' progress to plan and deliver challenging learning activities for all pupils.
- Ensure all managers take full responsibility for monitoring pupils' achievement.
- Ensure pupils have opportunities to develop and practice their skills in ICT in all subjects.

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

Standards reached by Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average but senior leaders are determined that pupils will do better. They set aspirational targets, particularly in English and Mathematics. The improved performance, particularly at the higher levels, in this year's national curriculum tests reflects the school's successful drive to improve basic skills. Underachievement is effectively spotted and a range of interventions to support pupils' learning are immediately implemented. For example, a daily phonics lesson ensures that pupils have the basic tools to improve writing. The high proportion of pupils joining the school throughout the year are not disadvantaged in any way and make good progress from their starting points because of the individual support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are confident that adults will help them if they have any concerns. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations made of them. There are very few racist incidents and no bullying. Attendance is good because pupils thoroughly enjoy school, value their friendships and appreciate the way teachers help them. They particularly value the interventions that help them improve their work. Pupils take a very full part in the life of the school and accept a range of responsibilities such as being a 'Playground Friend' to support younger pupils. School councillors feel they have influenced playtimes; these are now more enjoyable. Through activities such as helping to improve nearby gardens and raising money for charities, pupils make an excellent contribution to the local

community. Pupils discuss topical news items, which promotes empathy and develops confidence in expressing their views. Some pupils' basic skills, particularly in ICT are not fully developed because of a lack of opportunity to reinforce them in other subjects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lesson observations and feedback by subject consultants and the interim headteacher are helping to improve practice. Subject consultants also work with teachers to enhance subject expertise. However, opportunities to reinforce continuity in teaching through sharing the best practice are not fully maximized. Good use is made of talk partners to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teamwork is excellent and teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and achievement, particularly in the various support groups. Teachers know pupils very well, and most, but not all, use this information to plan and deliver challenging activities that meet individual needs. Resources are well used to support pupils' learning and teachers consistently celebrate pupils' efforts and achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. The concerted effort on developing literacy and numeracy skills has had a positive impact on learning. Throughout the school, effective displays and an impressive range of pupils' artwork and writing make an attractive and welcoming learning environment. The good range of after-school clubs and activities enhance pupils' experiences well. Visitors and educational visits support pupils' learning and enjoyment and enhances their work. The school provides well for pupils' personal, social and health education resulting in good outcomes. The school has plans to develop a curriculum that more effectively supports core skills in all subjects and to increase pupils' interest and enjoyment. For example, although ICT facilities are well used, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their computer skills or to use ICT to enrich other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Efficient and consistently applied school procedures and practice ensure pupils' safety and security. The very effective planning and teamwork between senior staff, learning mentor, teaching assistants and teachers meet pupils' personal needs well. Vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and receive specific support. For example, pupils who are new to the school and who may lack in confidence participate in activities such as the friendship club. This results in increased assurance, and self-esteem. Parents report that communication is good. A parent wrote, 'We receive weekly letters to inform us what has happened recently and what events are coming up.' Parents also appreciate the opportunities arranged by the school for gathering socially, and where their own learning needs are addressed. Not all marking of pupils' work gives clear guidance on how they may improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The interim headteacher works closely with the acting deputy headteacher and gives good strategic guidance and encouragement. Other managers are beginning to take a fuller responsibility for pupils' achievement, although wider opportunities for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress, such as through lesson observations are not yet embedded. This improvement is reflected in the increasing progress in pupils' academic and personal progress, although the school realises that there is more to do by leaders to establish more consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. There are high expectations made of staff and their work is valued. Professional development is valued highly and is clearly based upon school improvement, personal skills and meeting the needs of the pupils. For example, staff have received good quality advice and support in literacy and numeracy, which has helped them to deliver more effective lessons.

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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?	1
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	2

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	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	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Virginia Primary School, London, E2 7NQ

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed your company and were very pleased to see how well you enjoyed being in school. We think that your school is a satisfactory school. This means that some things are good and some things could be better. We think the youngest children in the Foundation Stage get a really good start to their education.

We liked these things the most.

- You learn to do things for yourself and you are friendly and polite to everyone.
- You have excellent attitudes to your learning and you work well together.
- All the staff work really well together to help you improve.
- You are really well involved in the school community and the wider community.
- You really like the clubs and after school activities.
- You improve your writing and reading as well as your listening and speaking.
- You think of others less fortunate than yourselves.
- Those of you new to the school or who need extra help are well looked after.
- The school works very effectively with other people to ensure you receive the support you need.
- The headteacher and all the staff have your best interests at heart.

You can help your learning by always participating to the best of your abilities in all activities. We have asked the school to work on these three things.

- Use all the information they have on the progress you are making to always set you challenging work.
- Ensure you get opportunities to practice and develop your ICT skills in all subjects.
- Ensure that subject leaders check more regularly on your work and that you are making the best possible progress.

It was a delight being in your school and we wish you all every future success.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Smith

Lead Inspector