

Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101021
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	307565
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Rogers

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	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Matthew Maxwell-Scott
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Newbiggin
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Smallwood Road Garratt Lane London SW17 0TW
Telephone number	020 8672 6024
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Smallwood is an average sized primary school that serves an urban area. There is an attached unit for pupils with language and communication disorders and a significant proportion of these pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. The unit has three classes that are set alongside mainstream classes in the school building. Additionally, over a third of the mainstream pupils have identified special needs, and the majority of them need extra help with language. The number of pupils who take free school meals is well above average. Families move in and out of the area more frequently than is usual. This is a diverse multicultural community and the number of pupils of minority ethnic origin is therefore much higher than the national average. Nearly half of the pupils require extra support with English when they arrive because they are new to the language. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark.

The number of teachers leaving the school over recent years has been greater than would be normally expected and the school has experienced difficulties in recruiting new staff. However, new subject leaders have recently been appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school requires Special Measures, because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. Pupils do not make enough progress in their lessons and their personal development is inadequate.

Standards in all subjects are exceptionally low across the school. This is because teaching is variable, leading to inadequate progress overall. The school and the local authority have worked together to improve the environment and the quality of teaching. This has been a slow and challenging process, due to staff leaving and the necessity to ensure that teachers recognised the need for change. There has been some improvement in teaching in Key Stage 2 and consequently pupils now make satisfactory progress in this key stage in English and mathematics. Progress across the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 in these subjects is inadequate, because there is too much weak teaching. Progress in science is unsatisfactory across the school. Teachers' marking is unsatisfactory and pupils' targets are not often referred to. Academic guidance is therefore inadequate. The curriculum is inadequate because the balance of subjects is not checked, schemes of work are insufficiently developed and there are very few additional activities to help make learning more interesting.

Pupils are not sufficiently well cared for, largely because the behaviour of pupils in one of the classes in the language unit is not managed appropriately and is so poor that it is unsafe. For example, a group of pupils were fighting during an information and communication technology lesson (ICT) and two of them later refused to leave the room. This had a detrimental effect on learning in the rest of the school because it prevented another class from having their ICT lesson. Other health and safety issues relating to the organisation of school trips and the resources in some classrooms were identified and reported to the school.

Most parents who responded were happy with the school's performance. However, a few were unhappy about pupils' behaviour in the language unit, confirming inspection judgements. Pupils have mixed views. They feel that lessons are not always interesting and that aspects of school, such as playtimes and visits, should be improved. However, most pupils like their teachers and feel confident that they can talk to them. Relationships in classes other than one unit class are good. In these classes, pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, although learners fidget when lessons are not as engaging as they could be. The school has worked hard to support pupils who struggle with language, and those who are not in the disrupted class make satisfactory progress. Teachers do not always plan well enough for pupils who are more able and, at times, their work is not sufficiently challenging. Despite the school's efforts, pupils' attendance is slightly below average.

Leadership of the school is inadequate because the headteacher and governors have failed in their duty to provide a safe environment for the pupils and the pace of improvement has been too slow. The headteacher works very hard, but she has had many issues to address and, until recently, little effective management support. As a result, her energies are spread too thinly. There have been several useful initiatives, such as participation in the national intensifying support programme designed to raise standards. This has had some impact on the quality of teaching. However, managing all these initiatives has increased the strain on the headteacher. The leadership team's methods for monitoring their actions and measuring success are not

robust enough to ensure that their plans are implemented effectively. The governing body is developing some expertise, with the help of the local authority, but currently does not hold the school sufficiently to account for pupils' achievement. Recent improvement has been limited. This demonstrates that the school does not have sufficient capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

The children start school with knowledge and skills that are weaker than those usually expected of three and four-year-olds. They settle quickly into the Nursery as staff have established good relations with parents and carers. Adults provide plenty of support and encourage them to try new things. Nevertheless, children's progress is inadequate overall because of inadequate teaching in the Reception class. Children in both classes do well where adults work alongside them and assist with their thinking and speaking. However, independent activities are not sufficiently planned or supported in either class. Consequently, children are unclear about what they might learn. The learning environment in both classes is poor. Equipment is unattractive and unstimulating and there is not always enough attention paid to safety in the Reception class. There have been recent changes to the leadership of the Foundation Stage and the new leader is clear about the necessary areas for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

Raise standards to at least average levels and improve pupils' achievement by:

- improving behaviour and ensuring that all pupils are safe and well cared for
- ensuring that teachers provide consistently good levels of challenge and clear academic guidance for their pupils
- ensuring that the curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and provides enjoyable activities that capture the interest of the pupils
- improving the ability of leaders, including the governors, to evaluate accurately the work of the school and to pursue improvement rigorously.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards in English, mathematics and science have fluctuated over recent years, but generally have been exceptionally low. Standards remain exceptionally low in English and mathematics throughout the school, except in the current Year 6. Here they are still below average, but teachers have worked hard to help pupils catch up. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2, because of the improved use of assessment information. This is helping teachers to identify pupils who need extra help and to plan appropriate work. The system is new and teachers are still developing their ability to assess accurately. The information is therefore not always as useful as it could be, especially in Key Stage 1 and the Foundation Stage. In these key stages, the overall progress of all groups of pupils is inadequate because teaching is unsatisfactory. Pupils new to English make better progress than others, due to extra support in class, but their progress is still inadequate. Progress in science is inadequate in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and the school recognises the need to improve data-handling skills and provide more opportunities for investigation. Pupils who need help with language skills in the main school and in two of the language unit classes make progress that is at least satisfactory because of well-managed support by additional staff. Progress in the third class is inadequate because of disruptive behaviour.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Personal development is inadequate because of the behaviour of a minority of pupils. Many pupils enjoy school, work hard and behave well. However, some exhibit very challenging behaviour at times, which impedes the progress of others and leads to an unproductive learning environment. Learners have clear guidelines for good behaviour and know the consequences of inappropriate actions. However, sanctions are not always consistently applied, particularly by staff new to the school. Pupils outside this situation say that they feel safe and that if bullying does take place problems are swiftly resolved. Attendance has fluctuated over recent months and is below the national average. This is due to pupils missing valuable learning time by taking unauthorised holidays during term time. Pupils appreciate the importance of healthy living and participate in sports, but would like more playground activities. The school council is becoming an increasingly influential 'pupil voice' in effecting change around the school. However, pupils feel that at times although they are consulted, they are not listened to, and that the environment does not improve fast enough. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Weaknesses in the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics significantly hamper their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not rigorous enough. Consequently, there is too little good teaching and too much that is inadequate. Where satisfactory learning takes place, mainly in Key Stage 2, this reflects clear expectations and motivating planned activities. However, many lessons lack an adequate level of challenge, especially for those of higher ability. In inadequate lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is poor. Pupils are not shown clearly what to do and resources are inappropriate or of poor quality. Teachers have improved the learning environment by using posters to reinforce vocabulary and methods of working. However, many classrooms look tired, with untidy displays and shabby furniture. Poor management of behaviour in one unit class led to unsafe behaviour. Marking is also variable, with teachers giving pupils little helpful information about their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is not monitored sufficiently to make sure that it is balanced and that all the necessary subjects are covered and enough time given to each. Schemes of work for some subjects such as physical education are unclear. The school is planning a review to make the curriculum more creative and introduce more links between subjects. Leaders recognise that there are still weaknesses in English, mathematics and science. There have been improvements since the last inspection in provision for ICT, with a new suite of computers and interactive whiteboards in classrooms. Sports coaches provide the necessary expertise in physical education, and modern foreign languages, such as Spanish have been introduced. The pupils are rightly disappointed in the range of clubs, visits and visitors and they feel that these have become more limited of late.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Staff are very concerned for the welfare of their pupils, but they are not always effective in making sure that pupils behave and follow school rules. Safeguarding policies do not meet government requirements, as health and safety checks are not rigorous enough. Child-protection procedures are clearly established. There are good arrangements for the identification and support of vulnerable pupils. However, academic guidance is inconsistent. Some pupils have their own individual targets, but they do not have a sufficient grasp of these targets or know what they need to do to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher has developed staff morale and team-working and has appointed a new senior and middle leadership team. However, despite the significant involvement of the Local Authority and a large number of consultants, improvements in the quality of teaching have been slow. To some extent, their work has been hampered by high levels of staff turnover and absence. New leaders in English, mathematics and science have evaluated their subjects, introduced effective assessment systems and drawn up plans of action. However, these systems are very new and there is not yet enough analysis of assessment information to evaluate the impact of the schools' work or track the progress of pupils. Overall, school self-evaluation is overly positive and insufficiently incisive to drive effective improvement.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
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	4
How well learners enjoy their education	4
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	4
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit, London, SW17 0TW

Thank you very much for your help when the inspectors visited your school this week. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work. We were pleased to hear that you like your teachers. We think that your headteacher, teachers and other staff work hard and, as a result, the children in your Key Stage 2 classes make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. However, we think that the children in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 do not always do well enough in English and mathematics and you could all do better in your other subjects. We also think that your personal development is not good enough, as you are not always as safe as you should be. Behaviour of some pupils is very poor. Classrooms and places where you learn have not always been checked thoroughly to make sure that they are safe. Some of you take too much time off school to attend family celebrations.

The inspectors believe that your school requires some 'special measures' to help it improve. This means that other inspectors will visit the school more often until it improves and to check how well you are doing.

We have asked the headteacher and teachers to:

- make sure that you are all safe all the time by improving your behaviour and their school safety checks
- make sure that your teachers always give you work that challenges you to think hard and make sure that you know exactly what to do to improve your work
- make sure that the curriculum is interesting and suits the needs of all of you
- make sure that the school is very clear about what needs improving and that leaders, including the governors, check regularly to make sure that this happens.

Yours sincerely

Sue Rogers

Lead Inspector