

Essendine Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101111
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	307586
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Stephens

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	466
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Ward
Headteacher	Mr Ken Batty
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2004
School address	Essendine Road London W9 2LR
Telephone number	020 7641 4382
Fax number	020 7641 4316

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than most primary schools. About four out of five pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and most speak English as an additional language (EAL). This proportion is well above average. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, in relation to English and mathematics, is just below what might be expected. The number of pupils either joining or leaving the school, other than at normal times is just above average. A new headteacher was appointed in 2006 and the school experienced a higher than normal turnover of teaching staff in 2007. The school belongs to a local Education Action Zone. It has received several awards, including the Healthy Schools Award, Active Sports Mark and Extended School status. It is a Pathfinder School within Westminster and takes part in the 'Walk to School' scheme.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory but rapidly improving school. Although children enter the Nursery with standards just below those expected, especially in communication and language skills. They make rapid progress through the Foundation Stage and more recently in Key Stage 1. Progress through Key Stage 2 is satisfactory and they leave the school with standards that are broadly average.

The school provides a secure and friendly environment. As one parent wrote, 'I am particularly happy with the level of diversity in this school and the way they make everyone feel welcome.' After a period of considerable turbulence that has seen many staff changes, the school has settled and is now clearly focussed on raising standards and improving achievement. A recent drive to raise attainment in mathematics has seen standards rise throughout the school, and the current focus on improving the quality of writing is having a positive impact for some pupils. In a comparatively short period, systems to regularly assess and track pupils' progress have been introduced. However teachers do not yet use the information gathered consistently enough to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs and that challenging learning targets are set in English, mathematics and science. Teaching is satisfactory overall and varies from good to inadequate. This means that progress in learning is variable. Teachers' marking of pupils' work also lacks consistency. Often it does not inform learning, and when it does there is insufficient evidence to show that pupils have either read or responded to the teachers' comments.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They move around the very large school building in a calm and purposeful manner, cooperate well and enjoy the many experiences offered. Staff and pupils are very proud of the newly opened 'Every Child Matters' building. This building, used by a variety of groups, is instrumental in helping to further links between the school and the local community. Pupils' understanding of what they have to do in order to lead healthy life styles is outstanding.

Like all pupils, those who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress in the early years where they are encouraged to talk, explain, enquire and share. The way in which the school draws on the many cultures represented to encourage greater tolerance and understanding is outstanding. Staff are working hard to adapt the curriculum to meet the many diverse needs of older pupils. Nevertheless there is insufficient structure to help teachers plan effectively to ensure that skills, knowledge and understanding are taught systematically to ensure that these pupils build well on what they understand and can do in subjects across the curriculum.

The leadership of the headteacher, well supported by his senior managers (Learning Executive), is good. Leadership and management overall is satisfactory because both subject leaders and transition managers are comparatively new to their roles and it is too soon for them to impact positively on the progress pupils make. Governance is satisfactory.

The school has quickly identified priorities and established clear procedures and systems that will help achieve them. The determination and commitment of all staff to raise standards is reflected in the positive impact on standards in mathematics and writing. Consequently the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good relationships exist with parents and carers. Arrangements to introduce children to school are well organised and successful. They benefit from good teaching that is supported by a good curriculum with a clear focus on developing language skills. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and opportunities for children to explore for themselves. Even during guided activities, children are encouraged to think for themselves and exercise choices. Hence, some in the Nursery class enjoyed eating meat and jam sandwiches that they had made! There are too few opportunities for children to grow plants outside to enhance their knowledge and understanding of living things. Reception classes build well on the experiences offered by the Nursery. Careful planning ensures that number work is well matched to ability and children make good progress. The teaching of letter sounds, complemented by skilled questioning that encourages children to reflect and explain, helps support the rapid development of pupils' communication skills. Despite this, some fall short of levels expected for their age by the end of the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the systems for tracking pupils' progress are used to set challenging targets, and raise achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and its impact on learning so that it is at least good throughout the school.
- Complete the review of the curriculum to ensure continuity and progression of knowledge, understanding and skills in all subjects in Key Stages 1 and 2.

A small proportion of 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

Children who start school speaking little English learn quickly. By the end of Year 2, standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics. They remain broadly average at the end of Year 6. Achievement is beginning to improve after a dip caused by considerable disruption to leadership and staffing in the past few years. It is also responding to the impact of recent measures taken to track pupils' progress and match work to their needs through teaching mathematics and English to classes of similar ability. The need to give pupils more opportunities to apply the skills they are taught in science has also been identified. The current drive to raise standards in writing has resulted in steady progress but this is not fast enough to make up for past underachievement. Pupils experiencing difficulties with aspects of reading and writing are given additional support by skilled teaching assistants and make satisfactory progress. Pupils with English as an additional language make rapid progress in their speaking and listening skills in the early years. The development of writing skills is slower, sometimes hampered by a limited breadth of vocabulary.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. There are particular strengths in their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils talk enthusiastically about events such as 'Bangladesh Week' and 'International Week' involving parents and the local community as pupils perform dances, sing songs and prepare food that is characteristic of their cultural heritage. Relationships at all levels are good and the school is a very safe and secure environment. Pupils are confident, polite and tolerant. They behave well and have many opportunities to take on additional opportunities such as class prefects. Pupils' views are represented well by both prefects and school councillors. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy helping new entrants to settle in. Rigorous monitoring procedures are helping to improve attendance and absence is now lower than at similar schools. Pupils' understanding of a 'healthy lifestyle' is outstanding. They start every day with an aerobics session, are offered healthy meals, and have many opportunities to take part in exercise. Standards attained by the end of Year 6 make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and their good relationships with teachers promote a positive and enjoyable learning environment. Planning for most lessons is thorough. Many include opportunities for speaking and listening that impact on the quality of writing. In the best lessons pupils are actively involved in the learning, and they work well both together and independently. They work hard and are eager to answer questions and share ideas. Teaching is lively and well-paced and teachers use interactive whiteboards confidently to support learning, using pupils' prior learning and good questioning to ensure they are making progress. However, in other lessons, pupils are not always clear about what is expected of them. Tasks are not always appropriately matched to their needs because assessment information is not used to build on what they already know and understand. Some teachers do not provide enough oral or written guidance for pupils on how they might improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils are extremely enthusiastic about the wide range of clubs and enrichment activities available to them, which include football, Arabic and homework. They also enjoy the many and varied visits and activities which link to and support their classroom learning. As one boy said, 'it brings learning into something that is fun'. The school has rightly focused on raising standards in mathematics and English and, in particular, writing. The recent introduction of systematic teaching of how spoken sounds relate to written words (phonics) is already helping the younger pupils and especially those with English as an additional language, to make progress in reading and writing. However, there are not many links between curriculum areas and pupils have few opportunities to apply the writing skills learned in English to writing in other subjects. The school recognises that there are gaps in curriculum coverage and that there is a lack of continuity and progression in the way that pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding. Work is now focusing on developing a more integrated approach to include language learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school. Procedures to create a safe environment are secure. However, safeguarding procedures do not meet requirements. This is because, even though procedures are secure, key personnel need to update their training with regard to child protection. Arrangements for staff to attend a relevant course in the very near future had already been made at the time of the inspection. Rigorous procedures for monitoring and encouraging good attendance have helped to bring about improvements and unexplained absentees are followed up rapidly. Pupils with limited or no English are made to feel very welcome and the school also works closely with community agencies to provide specialist help when the need arises.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has recently introduced rigorous assessment systems that provide teachers with the information they need to track the progress of individual pupils. However, the use of this information by teachers is inconsistent. Pupils have short term improvement targets for their reading, writing and mathematics and many are beginning to develop the skills needed to evaluate their progress. However, there are few references to targets in marking and procedures lack consistency.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The Learning Executive, well led by the headteacher, provides effective leadership. It has established a clear vision for the school and shared this with all staff. It is determined to raise standards and accelerate progress. It has introduced systems of management that help it monitor the impact of measures taken to raise standards. The roles of both transition managers and subject leaders are developing well, but it is too early for them to have had a significant impact on standards and progress. Their leadership is satisfactory. All managers have helped ensure that good personal development and the extended care offered to pupils, remains strong. An atmosphere conducive to learning is well established. Systematic monitoring of teaching takes place, revealing some inconsistencies. Governors are beginning to support the school well. They focus on the need to raise standards and have begun to challenge the school rigorously and to hold it to account for the standards achieved.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

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?	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	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
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

20 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Essendine Primary School, London, W9 2LR

I would like to thank you for being so polite, friendly and helpful when inspectors came to visit your school. We enjoyed meeting you, looking at your work and hearing about all the interesting things that you do.

We think you go to a satisfactory but rapidly improving school.

We think there are many things that happen in your school that are good and here are some of them.

- You get a good start to school in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2.
- Your behaviour is good and you support each other very well.
- Your teachers care for you very well.
- They plan many exciting and interesting things for you to do.
- You all understand how to live a healthy lifestyle, and many of you do.

Every school has something that could be better. We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to track your progress very carefully and set you challenging targets to help you do better in English and especially writing, mathematics and science. We have asked all your teachers to match work carefully to your ability and to teach you well throughout the school. We have also asked your teachers to look carefully at all the subjects to make sure that you develop skills well and increase your knowledge and understanding in everything you are taught.

With very best wishes for your future success.

Graham Stephens

Lead Inspector