

George Eliot Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101115
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	307588
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Barry Jones

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Katie Harvey
Headteacher	Ms Beatrix Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Marlborough Hill St John's Wood London NW8 0NH
Telephone number	020 7722 6870
Fax number	020 7483 0239

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Inspection number	307588

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

George Eliot is situated in an affluent area of inner London but the very large majority of pupils travel from further afield. Most of the pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds. For instance, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is three times the national average. Most pupils have a minority ethnic heritage and many are at the early stages of learning English. About one third of pupils are from asylum-seeking or refugee families. More pupils join or leave the school at unusual times than in most schools. Until the last year the school has experienced high turnover in staffing. The head teacher and deputy took up their posts in September 2006.

The school was inspected in September 2006. It was given a Notice to Improve because standards and achievement required significant improvement. There was a monitoring visit in May 2007 which judged the school to be making good progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in the previous report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. It has made very good progress since the previous inspection and is a good school. This is principally because of the excellent leadership provided by the new headteacher and deputy. They have galvanised the staff and this is reflected in the improving standards and positive ethos of the school. Some parents had lost confidence in the school but their trust has been restored and strengthened. As one parent wrote, 'I cannot believe the change in this school within the last year, it's great'.

Pupils' attainment is below average, and sometimes well below average, when they join the school. Standards are improving but vary too much. At best, as in the national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2007, they are above the national average. These pupils made outstanding progress. This was because of good and sometimes outstanding teaching in Year 6 which was supplemented by very effective strategies that were speedily introduced by the new senior management team. The school tracks the attainment of pupils very effectively and uses the data very well to identify underperformance and to provide effective programmes of help to pupils. Strategies have included working with a local secondary school to boost standards and generous staffing in targeted Year 6 classes. These methods were spectacularly successful with the outgoing Year 6. The school has not been able to sustain the same high level of resourcing throughout the school. In addition, it has been necessary to take robust action first to remedy weak teaching in some other year groups. The school has received good support from the local authority for this work. Progress in lessons has been accelerated but some pupils are still not achieving as well as they should given their starting points in the school. Standards are below average overall and this represents satisfactory achievement for most pupils. In particular, they do not do as well as they should in writing and the gap between reading and writing results is greater than found nationally.

One of the key factors underpinning the school's improvement has been the high priority given to professional development. The school has used the results from very careful analysis of data and from its thorough monitoring of the quality of teaching to ensure that the training is well targeted. This is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and has enabled the school to develop a rich curriculum. Most teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Data is provided to teachers that enable them to plan work well but they differ in their effectiveness to ensure that all abilities make good progress. When the identified improvements have not been made, further robust action has been taken by senior managers. There is also a very focused programme to improve the effectiveness of middle managers. As a result, they are now well placed to play a leading role in their areas of responsibility.

Behaviour is good and the improvement in the last year is another reason for the school's growing positive reputation. Relationships are good in this very diverse, multicultural community and pupils speak with pride about their school. As two pupils said, 'Teachers are friendly and helpful' and 'We all get on well together'. Their positive attitudes are also reflected in their increased attendance and evident enjoyment of school. The school links well with other agencies to provide good care and support for vulnerable pupils and this contributes well to the positive ethos.

The school has come a long way in a short time. Although teaching and pupils' achievement are not yet consistently good they are significantly better as a result of the school's efforts and are still improving. Given this proven track record, capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good.
- Raise standards in writing throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school's first priority in 2006/7 was to improve achievement and standards in Year 6. The improvements were very marked. For instance, compared to 2006 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in mathematics doubled. In science in 2006, the school was in the bottom 1% of schools nationally for progress from Year 2 to Year 6; in 2007 half the pupils attained the highest level. Consequently, the school exceeded its challenging targets.

The school's monitoring, scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observations show that these high standards are not being reached in other year groups. The standards in the current Year 6 are well below average and the targets set for them, though still challenging, are below expected levels nationally. The school recognises this and is taking appropriate actions but it is too early for them to be fully effective. Standards in Years 3 to 5 are below average. Given pupils' starting points, this reflects satisfactory achievement overall. There is still a legacy of underachievement from weaknesses in teaching in the past. However, in all classes most pupils have made good progress since the previous inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make the same progress as their classmates. Support for pupils with English as an additional language is good. Once they have mastered the language, they are then able to progress rapidly in their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This emanates from the caring ethos in the school. In assemblies and classrooms, issues such as bullying and racism are debated openly but sensitively. Pupils say there is a 'zero tolerance' to bad behaviour and accept this as fair. Consequently, they develop mature attitudes and are able to reflect on a number of issues. They have a good understanding of healthy-living matters. The school council is active and feels that its views are valued. For example, it successfully asked for extra playground equipment and more clubs. Pupils make a good contribution to school life and to the wider community. There are good links with secondary schools and, together with their improving basic skills, means that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for moving on to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching in Year 6 last year was enhanced by a significant input by the deputy and the school's monitoring shows this contribution was outstanding. In addition, senior managers contributed to improvements in the planning and teaching of science. Teaching in other year groups does not match this high quality. Nevertheless, it is satisfactory with some good features.

Teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards to add interest to lessons. They have successfully cultivated climates within classrooms that are conducive to learning. Lessons have clear learning objectives so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. In the best lessons, teachers also check that pupils have achieved the intended outcomes. Teachers vary in their effectiveness to deploy teaching assistants to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are met.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is good provision for numeracy, literacy and personal and social education. In addition, there is a good range of extra support including booster classes which contribute to the good progress of pupils. The school makes strenuous efforts to ensure that the curriculum reflects the rich diversity of its pupils. For instance, the school has invested considerably in visual resources for pupils with little English. The lives of asylum seekers and refugees is considered as a theme in Refugee Week and this increases understanding amongst all pupils. Work is adapted to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties with a good range of intervention programmes. Specialist teaching in art, French, physical education and music enriches the experiences for pupils. Work to link together separate subjects is developing well. In the last year, the school has produced a good plan for integrating the use of information and communication technology (ICT) into the work of other subjects. This is being implemented but as the school is not yet monitoring pupils' ICT skills it is too early to judge the impact. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that are attended well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are strong partnerships with other agencies that ensure vulnerable pupils are cared for well. The caring ethos in the school is shown by the welcome that is extended to new arrivals. The school quickly assesses these pupils' needs and other pupils act as "buddies". This means that they settle well and make good progress socially and academically. The school forges good links with the families and makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion. There is very good tracking of pupils' progress and this is a significant factor in the good progress made by pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils know what they have to do to improve their work but not all have individual targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior managers have been instrumental in raising the academic and personal standards of pupils. Some of the strategies have been aimed at the whole school, for instance, very effective use of data to inform teachers' planning and trigger additional programmes. Other successful initiatives have been very specific to Year 6 because of the urgent need to raise the standards of pupils before they leave the school. The school has overcome difficulties with recruiting staff and has good induction procedures for new staff. Appropriate steps have been taken to strengthen middle management through new appointments. Some subject leaders are relatively new to the role and so it is too early to judge their effectiveness. However, they have been provided with good training, given good role models and have been delegated clear responsibilities. Monitoring in the school is very thorough and exemplary in some respects.

High quality information is frequently provided to the governors. They have consequently asked searching questions and hold the school to account well. The school is financially stable and the school is preparing itself to ensure it meets benchmarking standards for financial management.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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 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	2
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	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	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?	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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

10 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of George Eliot Junior School, London, NW8 0NH

Thank you very much for the help and cooperation that you gave us when we inspected your school. You told us that you enjoy school, have some good teachers and feel safe in school. Members of your school council told us that they take their role seriously. They have helped to improve the equipment in the playground and requested more clubs. The sewing club was one of the clubs that is offered as a result of their efforts. Most importantly, you and your parents told us that George Eliot is a good school and has improved very much in the last year. We agree.

The things we particularly like about your school are:

- the results in last year's SATs were excellent
- you come to school wanting to learn and behave well
- the adults in the school care for you well
- you respect one another's beliefs and cultures
- you are able to enjoy some good experiences both in school and through after-school clubs
- your head teacher and deputy give excellent leadership.

The school is still improving. There are two things that we want to happen.

- Ensure that you all receive good teaching.
- Help you to write as well as you read.

For your part, please ask if you do not understand anything in class as the teachers will be very pleased to help you.

We wish you continuing success in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector