

Five Elms Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101228
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	307618
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	476
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	131
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Young
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Collins
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wood Lane Dagenham RM9 5TB
Telephone number	020 8270 4909
Fax number	020 8270 4908

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in its Nursery and three Reception classes. Just over half the school's pupils are of White British heritage. The remainder come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Over a third of pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average. Many of these have moderate learning difficulties. The school has Additionally Resourced Provision (known as the ARP) for 18 hearing-impaired pupils, which came under the direct control of the governing body in September 2007. The school has the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards and is an Investor in People. The headteacher has been in post since April 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Five Elms is a satisfactory and improving school. Standards are rising because of a new rigour in tracking pupils' progress and regular monitoring of the quality of teaching. The new leadership team knows the school's strengths and what needs to improve and are systematically tackling the issues they have identified. The impact is evident in pupils' good behaviour and their positive attitudes to learning. Also, teaching is at least satisfactory and increasingly good. Parents value the school's friendly ethos and the good care, guidance and support their children receive. One commented, 'It is great, the partnership between parents, teachers and pupils.'

Pupils make satisfactory progress from starting points generally below what is normally expected for their age. In the provisional results of the 2008 national tests for Year 6 pupils, standards were below average in English and broadly average in mathematics and science. This represented a considerable improvement on previous years. The new headteacher has put in place a comprehensive tracking system that shows clearly how individuals are performing and has introduced regular meetings at which teachers discuss the progress of their pupils. The school is thus able to identify groups of pupils who need additional support and can help them to catch up. While they can see the impact of this work in improved standards generally, currently leaders do not specifically measure the effectiveness of their interventions. This means they are not clear how successful each initiative has been for particular groups of pupils.

Effective lesson planning helps teaching to focus on exactly what pupils are to learn. Because relationships are good, pupils are keen to take part in lessons and receive plenty of encouragement for their efforts. Pupils have established workmanlike habits, even when sometimes the teaching is not very inspiring. More able pupils in particular are not always challenged sufficiently. This helps to explain why fewer pupils attain the higher levels by the end of Year 2 in reading and mathematics. The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for the development of literacy and numeracy skills, with recent innovations such as the increased use of drama and role-play appealing to boys. There is good enrichment in the form of a wide variety of clubs and interesting visits and visitors.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as they work and play harmoniously together. They have a good understanding of one another's cultures and contribute well to the school and wider community. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously in encouraging pupils to make healthy choices and purchasing playground equipment. Pupils say they feel free from bullying and harassment and enjoy school. Most pupils attend well and attendance has improved since the last inspection. Pupils work well together in teams and are becoming independent learners. A large majority of pupils acquire the expected skills in readiness for secondary school.

The impact of leadership and management is satisfactory in reversing a downward trend in standards. The headteacher and other senior leaders give the school clear direction focused on making sure all pupils achieve their potential. Several middle managers are establishing themselves in new roles this term. Effective monitoring helps leaders to keep abreast of the school's progress against its priorities. The full impact of some of the more recent changes is not yet evident. There is a satisfactory capacity for the school to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Nursery with a wide range of skills and abilities that are below expectations, especially in personal and social development and in communication, language and literacy. They settle quickly because there is good provision for their welfare and they have opportunities to socialise and develop their independence. Children engage in a wide range of activities that interest them. The school's structured approach to learning suits many of the children who find it hard to concentrate. Children make satisfactory progress, although many do not reach the expected learning goals for their age by the time they leave Reception. A new system for monitoring and recording their progress is giving staff detailed information about children's needs. Planning for the use of the shared outdoor garden area is not detailed enough and does not take into account the full range of pupils' learning needs. This means that currently Nursery and Reception children do the same activities even though developmentally they are up to a year apart. The outdoor spaces adjacent to classrooms are not used to best advantage. Satisfactory leadership and management is building a cohesive staff team, but monitoring of the EYFS is at an early stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve planning for the EYFS outdoor curriculum so that it makes a full contribution to children's learning and development.
- Eliminate inconsistencies in teaching particularly in challenging higher attaining pupils, so that all lessons are at least good.
- Monitor rigorously the impact of specific initiatives and interventions in order to assess how well they raise pupils' standards and achievement.

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 are broadly average and improving at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 because of a renewed focus on the progress of individual pupils. An effective tracking system identifies those pupils at risk of falling behind and the school provides an appropriate range of support to accelerate their learning. Achievement is satisfactory for most pupils, with some making good progress. However, the teaching does not always sufficiently challenge the more able pupils to attain the higher levels, especially by the end of Year 2. The hearing-impaired pupils achieve well when receiving specialist support because of the effectiveness of the provision in the ARP. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make satisfactory progress against the targets on their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are good. They celebrate one another's cultures and have a good appreciation of moral issues. Pupils are using Black History Month to study the lives of key cultural figures. They have examined the values of Benjamin Zephaniah through his poems and learnt about the struggle and sacrifice made by Dr Martin Luther King to achieve

equality for all races. Pupils care for one another well, with the older pupils supporting the younger ones. They take plenty of exercise including regular swimming and have a good understanding of the dangers of illegal drugs. They especially enjoy the good range of extra-curricular activities, such as their residential visit, when they can develop independence and social skills away from home. Their behaviour is good, and they say it has improved because of the consistent approach of senior staff. One pupil commented, 'Our headteacher sorts out problems straight away.' Pupils raise funds for a variety of charities both at home and abroad and are involved in community events such as music festivals and sports tournaments. They develop a strong work ethic and cooperate well so that they are satisfactorily prepared for lifelong learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is adapted to meet the needs of most groups of pupils well, so that, for example, an emphasis on speaking and listening engages pupils who are learning English as an additional language. However, there are inconsistencies in how well the planning meets the learning needs of all pupils, especially for higher attainers. Teachers use a variety of methods to interest pupils. As one pupil said, 'They try to do some fun stuff.' Pupils recall acting out the pollination of a flower and seed dispersal in science as a memorable way of learning. While some teaching excites and enthuses pupils, much is routine. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution in helping pupils with moderate learning difficulties to make satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum gives pupils opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in a methodical way. It can be rather pedestrian at times, lacking dynamism and imagination. There are growing links across subjects to make learning more relevant. The visit of 'Florence Nightingale' during the inspection enabled Year 2 pupils to find out about her life and work, to ask questions and to record their findings. The hearing-impaired pupils are included well in mainstream classes, with effective provision to enable them to participate fully. Curriculum enrichment is good, which contributes well to pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school. Pupils go on many visits, including the Tower of London and the British Museum. They visit different places of worship and have a good understanding of the beliefs of other faiths. There is high participation in a wide range of clubs including healthy heart, drama and school magazine.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A parent said, 'The teachers are very supportive and always willing to help and guide the children.' The school's caring ethos ensures each child feels valued. There is outstanding support for vulnerable pupils and the parent support adviser works closely with families. Hearing-impaired pupils in the ARP receive effective support, and this follows them when they visit mainstream classes, with signing and other assistance to enable them to be included. All safeguarding and welfare requirements are fully met. Pupils know what they have to do to improve their work, although they do not always have time to show they have read and responded to the comments

in their books. They understand their targets, and these are helping them to grow in confidence and build up their skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership, ably supported by the deputies and assistant headteacher. Their clear focus on raising standards and achievement is beginning to bear fruit in all year groups, with a rigorous approach to setting targets and monitoring the progress of individual pupils. At present, the school does not evaluate the impact of specific interventions for groups of pupils, so is not fully aware how successful they are. Effective coaching and modelling of good teaching is improving the provision for pupils. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, with the correct priorities identified in its strategic planning. New leadership from many of the middle managers and from within the governing body means that the school is going through a period of transition. Some middle managers, such as the learning leaders, have not yet met to compare notes and ensure consistency of approach throughout the school. Governors are supportive and beginning to take a more strategic role in holding the school to account. The school is successful at unifying its community and in reaching out to parents and other organisations.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

22 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Five Elms Primary School, Dagenham, RM9 5TB

We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school, which provides you with a satisfactory level of education. These are some of its strengths.

- You behave well and care for one another.
- You work hard in lessons and are keen to take a full part.
- You know all about how to keep healthy and stay safe.
- There are lots of clubs and visits for you to enjoy.
- The school cares for you well, especially if you are having difficulties.
- You have a good understanding of your own and others' cultures and contribute well to the school and wider community.
- Your headteacher and other leaders are making a difference and helping the school to get better day by day.

Children in the Nursery and Reception settle quickly. They have a large outdoor area to play in and we have asked staff to plan activities for them that build on what they are learning in the classroom. Throughout the school, we believe some of you who find work easy could be challenged more and have asked your teachers to give you harder work to do. Many of you who are getting extra help are catching up with the other pupils. We have asked leaders to measure how well you do as a group when you are receiving this support.

Thank you once again for making us so welcome. Our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead Inspector