

Deansbrook Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101274
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	307635
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Maria Coles

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	319
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jeanette Poulton
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Hull-McCracken
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001
School address	Hale Drive Mill Hill London NW7 3ED
Telephone number	020 8959 2152
Fax number	020 8959 4350

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

Three Additional Inspectors carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

Deansbrook Infants is a larger than average school, with thirty-nine part-time places in the nursery. It serves a diverse multi-cultural community. The pupils have a variety of social and educational needs including a higher than average level of social deprivation. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is much higher than the national average. Over half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and do not have English as their first language. The school has gained the Healthy School Award, Effective Early Learning Quality Award, Arts Mark, Gold and Silver awards from the London in Bloom competition and Investors in People accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Deansbrook Infants is an outstanding school where all pupils do very well both academically and socially. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have ensured that both pupils and staff embrace their high expectations and joy for learning. There are exemplary systems to monitor the work of the school to ensure that all pupils make excellent progress. Achievement overall is therefore outstanding. One parent commented 'I have seen continuous progression in my child's learning. He shows an eagerness to learn new things as well as coming home to share his day with excitement and new questions'. This is a typical view of the parents who are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, its staff and leadership.

Pupils' personal development including social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. The school fosters excellent and caring behaviour. Extremely positive attitudes to learning ensure that all pupils strive to do their best.

A majority of pupils start school with lower than expected level of skills for their age and make excellent progress by the end of Year 2. National tests for 2007 show they reach standards that are well above average overall and exceptionally high in writing. The school has made great progress since its last inspection. It has adopted successful strategies to address past underachievement and this has resulted in accelerated progress and higher standards for all pupils. This gives the pupils an excellent grounding in basic skills and means that they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education at junior school.

The teaching, including in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Work is well matched to pupils' varying ability levels so that the more able are challenged and the less able supported, which ensures all make very good progress. Excellent and focused intervention and support group work ensures that all pupils including those with English as an additional language, learning difficulties and disabilities and the more able get exactly what they need to progress to the best of their abilities and potential.

The curriculum is outstanding. Curriculum review and development is part of the school's drive to ensure that the content of what is taught fully matches the pupils' changing needs. This drive is reflected in stimulating and relevant content that interests and excites the pupils. For instance, during the week of the inspection, the school was holding a Science themed week focusing on exploration and investigation.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has built up and improved upon the school's existing strengths. All work is focused on raising standards, and their success is shown in their consistent improving results over the last three years. This has been part of an upward trend since the last inspection. The school's use of targets to promote high achievement is exemplary. Thorough and detailed analysis of pupils' attainment and progress in each year group ensures that the school has realistic and challenging goals. It successfully meets its goals and is always looking for ways to do things better. The headteacher has the support and commitment of a very strong and able staff team who know and understand the school and work well together. Governors have a good understanding of their overall strategic role, liaise well and provide support for the school but are not as effective in holding the school to account. The school has put in place effective strategies to improve attendance. All issues from the last inspection have been fully addressed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter in the Nursery with levels of attainment below that expected for three year olds. They make rapid progress so that by the age of five, the end of their Reception year, a large proportion of them are reaching expected levels of attainment in most areas of learning. The highly skilled foundation stage leader has put in place rigorous assessment systems, which help the school to track the progress of children closely and to identify their areas for improvement. Consistently good teaching in all classes, a balance of adult led and child initiated activities and focused support contributes to the good progress that children make. The school provides a safe and stimulating environment for the children and exciting opportunities for learning. Relationships between adults and children are caring and trusting. The school does much with parents and carers to settle in new children and ensure that they are supported in helping their children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

Develop governor's skills in monitoring to enhance their knowledge of the school's performance so that they can hold it to account more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are above average by the end of Year 2. Achievement is outstanding because of consistently good teaching and effective systems to identify and support any pupil falling behind to ensure that they make good progress. The results of national tests at the end of Year 2 have improved over the last three years. In 2007, results were well above average in reading and mathematics and exceptionally high in writing. All pupils, including those with English as an additional language, achieve exceptionally well. Pupils gain a very good understanding of sounds and letters and practice writing from foundation stage. This contributes to their excellent progress in reading and writing. Both boys and girls do equally well, as do pupils from ethnic minority groups and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils say that they enjoy school and find lessons interesting. As one parent said, 'My son gets upset if he cannot attend school even if he is ill. He loves the environment and brings his learning home with him'. Behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel safe and demonstrate very trusting relationships with all the adults in the school. The school has successfully cultivated an ethos in which the feelings and beliefs of others are very well respected leading to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Levels of attendance have improved over the last three years. The school has implemented extensive strategies to reduce the number of unexplained absences with some success. The vast majority of pupils understand that healthy food and exercise contribute to healthy lifestyles. Most take up the healthy food choices at lunchtime and participate in extra exercise during the regular 'Walk to School' weeks.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The school provides consistently high quality teaching which brings about outstanding levels of achievement. This is a result of rigorous monitoring and effective professional development for all teachers, based on clear identification of priorities. Teaching is characterised by very clear learning objectives, high expectations of effort and behaviour, brisk pace and activities that are carefully matched to individual abilities. Pupils always know what it is they are expected to learn. Their eagerness for learning is readily captured through many stimulating activities, such as those presented on interactive white boards. Both teachers and pupils use this new technology equally well. The effective use of phonics, in particular, prepares the way for successful writing. Good quality marking helps pupils to improve their work, which is neat and very well presented. Teachers make very good use of additional staff to support those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and pupils who are learning to speak English. Parents are very pleased with the good information they receive in order to support them in helping their children with their learning. As one said, 'Deansbrook is one of the best schools ever and they take everything into consideration.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Teachers take into account the needs and talents of all pupils when planning the curriculum for their classes. Literacy and numeracy skills are very well promoted across the curriculum. For example, pupils develop their writing skills in history and geography projects. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is used extensively to support learning and good use is made of the new ICT suite. The curriculum is enriched and enhanced by the 'themed' weeks such as those for art, music and numeracy and science, as well as by specialist coaching in football and dance. There is also a good programme of visits and visitors to support learning and personal development. The school provides a wide range of activities outside normal lessons such as spelling, movement, music and football clubs and these are popular with pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care for its pupils lies at the heart of the school, and as a result, this aspect is outstanding. The school is a very safe and secure place for them. All adults in the school show a high level of commitment in promoting the health and safety of pupils.

The school's policies and procedures for risks assessment and child protection are securely in place and very well understood by staff. The school keeps very good records of the checks made on the background of the staff and other adults working in the school. The Health Week programme pays very good attention to the development of safe and healthy life styles.

The Health and Welfare officer and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator together with very good links with external agencies help pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities, and medical problems. Pupils who join the school part way through the year are helped to settle very quickly. The school's strong links with the adjacent junior school provide pupils with a smooth transition. Very good tracking of pupils' progress ensures that any concerns are identified quickly. Records are used very effectively to plan lessons and meet pupils' needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The experienced headteacher is well thought of within the school and Local Authority. She has successfully established a strong team who all share the same vision and direction for the school. Their collective work has had a significant impact on raising standards over the last three years. The establishment of a cohesive system of monitoring performance, both in terms of pupils and staff, has brought about improvements in the quality of teaching and in the standards achieved by pupils.

The very effective monitoring and self-evaluation of the school has enabled both senior and middle managers to have a clear picture of what needs to be improved. Governors offer a wide range of expertise, which enables them to provide effective levels of support. They still do not challenge the school enough through monitoring lessons and work to form judgments of the school's performance for themselves.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

27 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Deansbrook Infant School, London, NW7 3ED

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed our visit to your school and were very pleased to see how happy and polite you all were. We were even more pleased to see how much you enjoyed your lessons and how well you all got on with your learning. We think that your school is an outstanding school with an excellent headteacher, deputy headteacher and teachers. They really know what you need to help you do better, plan interesting and exciting lessons for you and make sure that everyone learns at their own pace. Everyone in your school always wants the best for you and always tries and keeps you safe and well. We know that you and your parents like your school enormously and this helps to make it a wonderful, happy place for you.

We think the main thing that has to be done to help your school improve is for your governors to come in and see you when you are working so that they can see how well the school is doing.

Yours Sincerely

Maria Coles

Lead Inspector