

Dollis Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101275
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	307636
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Jane Chesterfield

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	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Living
Headteacher	Ms Christine Rayner
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001
School address	Pursley Road Mill Hill London NW7 2BU
Telephone number	020 8959 3995
Fax number	020 8959 8702

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dollis Infant School serves a culturally diverse residential community of social and owner-occupied housing. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is double the national average. About three-quarters of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and more than half are learning English as an additional language. These figures are very high compared with the national picture. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is slightly higher than the national average. Just over half of the children in the Reception classes do not come from the school's Nursery.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Dollis Infants is a satisfactory and improving school with some good features. The headteacher and her deputy have made a very positive and determined start since they joined the school, and have quickly and efficiently evaluated the school's strengths and the areas it needs to improve. They have been successful in developing a sense of team spirit amongst the staff and in uniting the school community in a drive for improvement. As one parent said, 'Together we can reach our target.'

Senior staff have identified achievement and standards as the main priorities for improvement. Achievement is satisfactory across the school taking into account children's capabilities. Standards have fluctuated in recent years, but last year dipped below average and pupils did not perform as well as they might have done, particularly in writing, but also in reading and mathematics. Boys did less well than girls in all three areas. The school is taking action to raise standards, and its careful monitoring of pupils' progress shows that there are already encouraging signs of improvement. Over the last term pupils in Year 2 have been making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, though standards remain below average.

The reason for this improvement is the systematic approach established by senior staff for monitoring the work of the school. Teaching and learning are regularly assessed and pupils' performance is closely tracked. Senior staff use this information accurately to target improvements. The quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory, but this has also started to improve as a result of the school's spreading of good practice and support for individuals. There is now more good teaching evident, as less experienced staff are helped to refine their skills. However, there is more work to be done in improving pupils' learning, as many are not clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to make their work better.

Pupils like their teachers and lessons and are happy to be at school. Their attendance has improved significantly over the last year, thanks to the hard work of the school. The curriculum is satisfactory, and has some good additional activities such as clubs and visits which appeal to pupils. They particularly enjoy their residential visit, which is an exciting prospect for those in Year 2. Pupils behave well in class and around the school, because pastoral care is good and they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and others. This means that they feel safe and secure in their surroundings. The school works well in partnership with others for the benefit of its pupils. Parents are pleased with the school and comment positively on what it does for their children. One said, 'There is a warm family feeling within the school', while another felt, 'The school effuses a happy, calm and contented atmosphere.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Most children start the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in their language and literacy, mathematics and personal development. They settle well into the daily routines of the class and learn to co-operate with one another, developing good attitudes to their learning. The children make satisfactory progress during their time in the Foundation Stage. By the time they leave, their skills are still well below expectations in reading and writing, and below in personal development, speaking and listening, and mathematics.

Teaching is satisfactory. Resources are used well to develop children's independence and there is a good balance between activities directed by the teacher and those chosen by the children. However, there is not always enough interaction between children and adults, nor enough emphasis on encouraging children to talk and contribute to whole class sessions. Good new systems for monitoring children's progress and for planning the curriculum have been introduced, although they have yet to make a full impact on achievement and standards. The school has identified that the outdoor play areas in the Foundation Stage need to be better developed to enhance children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in writing, and also in reading and mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching in the school so that pupils are actively involved in their learning.
- Implement systems for target setting so that pupils know how to improve their work.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, including that of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and of those learning English as an additional language. Their standards are below average in reading, writing and mathematics, and the school is working hard to raise them. Senior staff have identified that pupils are having difficulties recognising sounds and letters in literacy, and in carrying out calculations in numeracy, and there has been an increased focus on developing these skills. Staff are also aware of the particular need to improve boys' achievement, and are introducing ideas and resources designed to appeal to boys and make them want to read and write. These strategies are already beginning to have an impact and there are clear signs that pupils' progress is improving.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They enjoy being able to reflect on and share their feelings, and they value the different cultures and faiths around them. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being on the school council, although they could have more opportunities to give their views on how to improve school life.

Bullying and racist incidents are rare, and pupils feel that adults deal with these well. The school has worked successfully to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles through such initiatives as the whole school physical day, a good number of sporting clubs, and 'Huff and Puff' at lunchtimes. Although attendance is still an issue for the school, there have been significant improvements recently. This is due to the introduction of rigorous systems for chasing up absence and promoting good attendance. Pupils are developing the social skills they need to prepare them for the future, but their literacy and numeracy skills are still not good enough.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good elements. Typically, there are good relationships in class between children and adults, and pupils who find it hard to behave are well managed. Teachers make good use of their teaching assistants and their learning resources to involve and interest pupils. Planning is thorough, though it does not always take into account the whole range of abilities in the class, particularly the more able pupils. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to interact with pupils and develop their vocabulary and their speaking and listening skills. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but marking does not always indicate to pupils what the next step is to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities to meet the needs and interests of pupils. There have been good recent improvements in facilities for information and communication technology so that pupils can develop their skills more easily. Curriculum enrichment is good, and pupils are enthusiastic about the visits, visitors and special events, such as the European languages day and the annual Music Festival. Links across subjects in the curriculum are not strongly developed, and this means that pupils are not confident in transferring skills from one lesson to the next. The school has improved its book collection to increase pupils' interest in reading and in particular to encourage boys' desire to read and write. These strategies are already beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school works hard to meet the wide-ranging personal needs of all pupils. It focuses successfully on raising their self-esteem and encouraging good behaviour, for example through popular initiatives such as Golden Time. There are robust systems for safeguarding pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language are effectively supported in class and in their withdrawal groups. The school tracks pupils' progress closely but does not currently set pupils targets for improvement. This means that pupils do not know how to take the next step in their learning. The school has plans to address this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Good leadership by the headteacher, capably supported by the deputy, has given the school a clear direction and high aspirations for the future. Under their guidance, leaders at all levels are developing their confidence and understanding of their roles. Several are new to their posts and the impact of their work is not yet apparent, while some experienced postholders are due to leave the school shortly. However, all are enthusiastic about their roles and committed to school improvement.

The governors fulfil their roles well. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces, and they are able to combine a supportive approach with high expectations for the school's performance. Systematic monitoring and tracking of the school's work mean that school self-evaluation is good, and senior staff have an honest and realistic understanding of where the school is, where it needs to be and how it is going to get there. In view of this, and of the improvement which is already becoming apparent in teaching and in pupils' progress, the school has a good capacity for further 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?	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	3
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	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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	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	2
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	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

19 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Dollis Infant School, London, NW7 2BU

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We found that your school is satisfactory at the moment, but that a lot is improving. Your teachers are making lessons more interesting for you, and so you are learning more quickly. This will mean that you do better in your reading, writing and mathematics.

We know that you enjoy going to school, and we were impressed with your behaviour in class and in the playground. We thought that everyone gets on well together, and that the staff take good care of you.

Your school is run satisfactorily, and the staff know what needs to be done to improve it. We have agreed that they are going to help you all do better in your reading, writing and mathematics, especially the boys. They will make sure that you understand what you are learning, and that you know what you need to do to make your work even better. You can help by telling your teachers if you do not understand something in your lessons, so they can explain it more clearly.

Well done to you all and best wishes for the future.

Jane Chesterfield

Lead Inspector