

Queenswell Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101313
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	307649
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Malcolm Johnstone

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 (total)	328
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Guilford
Headteacher	Mr Spencer Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Sweets Way Whetstone London N20 0NQ
Telephone number	020 8445 2056
Fax number	020 8446 4188

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This junior school is larger than average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There is also a well above average proportion of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Most of these pupils have English as an additional language and there are 32 different languages spoken. Some of these pupils are at the early stages of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with a broad range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational needs, is well above average. There is a small proportion of pupils from army families. Pupil mobility is above average. The school has received a number of awards, including Investors in People, Healthy Schools and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school is providing a satisfactory education. It has a number of important strengths and its effectiveness is improving as some well-conceived development strategies begin to take effect. Standards are rising because teaching is improving. There is a strong commitment to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Pupils' pastoral care, guidance and support, and their personal development and well-being are good. They know that staff will listen to their concerns and help them overcome them. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and racial harmony is strong. Most pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school's support for community cohesion is satisfactory. The school community is a lively, friendly place in which pupils have a reasonable degree of involvement in school improvement. Their involvement in the local community is sound, as is their understanding of national and international issues through learning in a range of subjects. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. There is a good range of well attended extra-curricular activities in the satisfactory curriculum. The large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire are supportive of the school. 'I have been delighted with the hard work, professionalism and care shown towards my child,' was a comment echoed by a number of parents.

Standards are average overall. They are below average in English. While standards in reading are broadly average, they are below average in writing. In mathematics and science, standards are broadly average but pupils are not adept at applying their skills and knowledge in problem solving situations. The school is working to address these issues and there are signs of improvement. Achievement is satisfactory overall. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress when they receive additional small group and individual support. There is insufficient challenge in the work provided for the more able pupils to accelerate their progress and raise standards.

Teaching is satisfactory. The school is aware that the variable quality of lessons, which ranges from outstanding to satisfactory, contributes to the unevenness of pupils' progress. It has recognised that there is not enough good teaching to improve achievement. The best teaching is characterised by well planned activities that require pupils of all abilities to work at pace and be actively involved throughout. Where the teaching is less effective, activities do not build successfully enough on pupils' prior learning and expectations of what the more able can achieve are not high enough.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has strengthened teamwork and ensured that all are focused on raising standards and improving achievement. Teachers with leadership and management responsibilities say that they feel more involved and empowered to develop their roles. The school has developed a range of monitoring, tracking and assessment procedures over the past year. However, the information gained from these procedures is not used effectively enough to improve target-setting and match work more closely to pupils' needs.

Self-evaluation is good and provides an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Actions taken by the school are well chosen and carefully planned. For example, weaknesses in pupils' reading on entry to Year 3 have resulted in a more regular whole school approach to the teaching of letter sounds. Standards in reading are improving as a result. A similarly systematic approach to the teaching of writing skills is beginning to show improvement.

Together with the commitment of all who work in the school to raising standards, a restructured, more effective and cohesive senior leadership team, good governance and improvements in teaching, there is good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and pupils' achievement with a particular focus upon writing and investigative learning in mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more is good or better, and ensure that there is greater consistency in challenging the more able pupils.
- Make better use of assessment and tracking information to guide the school's action towards raising 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

Pupils' standards on entry to Year 3 span the whole range of ability but, until recently, have been generally below average. Overall standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. In mathematics and science, they are close to the national average but in English, they are below average. This is largely because of weaknesses in pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation skills and in their ability to produce extended pieces of writing. A more sustained and systematic approach to the teaching of writing over the past year is beginning to improve standards and pupils' achievements. In mathematics and science, weaknesses in pupils' ability to apply what they know in problem-solving is a weaker aspect. The pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils and are well represented in the upper ability groups. While the progress of the more able pupils is satisfactory, not enough is expected of them, so that too few reach the higher National Curriculum levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils understand the differences between right and wrong and understand the importance of rules in order to keep them safe. Pupils behave well in the large majority of lessons and in the playground and assemblies. They have a good knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet and understand the importance of exercise in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy their lessons and think their teachers explain things '...in a fun way'. Good personal development is promoted by pupils' high attendance at a range of clubs including sports, music, drama and homework support. Pupils have opportunities to take responsibility in the eco council, on the school council and as 'buddies' for children new to the school. Pupils know their views are valued and the school council gives them a voice in the school. They are very proud that they raise money for others as well as to improve the school for themselves. Recently this has included organising a cake sale to raise money for new playground equipment and for a national children's hospital. Personal, social and health education lessons help pupils to develop their understanding of their feelings and those of others. Attendance is broadly average and improving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning varies from class to class. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and most manage their classes effectively so that pupils concentrate well during lessons. The best lessons move at a fast pace and are pitched at an appropriate level for the different abilities of pupils. Therefore, pupils remain interested and focus sharply on their learning. There are high expectations for what pupils can achieve and how they should behave. Interactive whiteboards support learning well in most lessons. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, computers were used to great effect to stimulate and extend pupils' learning.

However, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning slows, so some pupils lose interest and do not make the progress of which they are capable. In these lessons, there is a lack of challenge for the more able pupils. The teaching of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good when in small groups and on an individual basis. This helps them to make good progress. Teaching assistants and parent helpers provide good support for pupils across a range of activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy the broad range of activities provided for them. The curriculum overall allows them to make satisfactory progress. It includes good provision to increase pupils' awareness of health and safety issues. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including music and sport. The school is working with some success to develop a more creative cross-curricular approach to learning. For example, work in dance is linked well to a topic on Greek myths and legends. However, this approach is not a consistent feature of curriculum planning. Pupils gain satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding across the curriculum, but opportunities to develop enquiry, investigation and problem-solving skills are not sufficient to ensure that all pupils become effective independent learners. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects such as history and geography.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The atmosphere is warm, welcoming and supportive, while all safety measures are effectively enforced. The school deals well with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and includes them in all activities. There is good support for vulnerable pupils and this is linked effectively to support from outside agencies, coupled with an effectively flexible approach to their problems. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school is beginning to provide pupils with advice on how they can improve their work, but this is at an early stage and lacks consistency. Target-setting is relatively new and is not yet having any significant impact on pupils' progress. There are inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work. In the best examples, marking says what pupils have done well and informs them what they need to do next to improve, but this is not a consistent feature in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, with good support from the senior leaders, has a clear idea of the way forward and has taken effective steps to tackle appropriate priorities aimed at raising standards. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher provide clear direction and staff understand that they share the responsibility for the progress pupils' make. Staff have good opportunities for professional development and are now held much more to account for the quality of their work. Senior leaders are good role models in their own teaching. Standards are improving across the year groups but new initiatives to make better use of tracking and assessment data are not yet embedded securely. Target-setting is satisfactory. It is now based on a range of data about pupils' performance but, although starting to raise standards, has not yet lifted them above average. Governance is good. It has improved over the past year and is proactive in holding the school to account and asking the critical questions that keep senior leaders on their toes.

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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?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	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 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

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	2
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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

16 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Queenswell Junior School, London, N20 0NQ

Thank you all for being so friendly and polite to us when we visited recently. We came to find out about the quality of education the school provides for you. It was interesting to watch you learn, listen to your views and discover how well you are doing. We have said that your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. This means that while there are good things happening in your school, there are still some important things that should be better.

Your personal development and well-being are good and you obviously enjoy school because your attitudes to learning, your behaviour and the way that you join in with everything enthusiastically are all good. It was great to see how well you all get on together and how you help to make all new pupils feel so welcome. The quality of teaching you receive is satisfactory overall, although we saw some good lessons where interesting things were happening. We think you make satisfactory progress, but you do not make as much progress as you should in writing, or in investigative work in mathematics and science. Some of you who find work quite easy do not always get work that is hard enough. The quality of your curriculum is satisfactory and you told us how much you enjoy the chances you get to do 'exciting' things both in class and in the clubs and visits that take place. We particularly enjoyed the lovely music assembly where everyone joined in and had a great time. The school takes good care of you and the support you get to boost your learning is satisfactory. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and we know that all the adults who work in school have your best interests at heart.

Although we think your school is improving we have asked the headteacher and staff to:

- make sure you do better in all your subjects, but particularly with your writing, problem-solving in mathematics and investigative work in science
- improve the teaching so that it enables you to make even better progress and ensures that those of you who find the work easy are given harder work
- use all the information they keep on your progress more effectively to set targets that help you improve even more.

Yours faithfully

Malcolm Johnstone

Lead Inspector