

Mitchell Brook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101524
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	307720
Inspection date	7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	401
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Adrian Papprell
Headteacher	Ms Theresa Landreth
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003
School address	Bridge Road London NW10 9BX
Telephone number	0208 459 1392
Fax number	0208 830 4876

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional inspector. The inspector investigated the following issues in detail: achievement and standards, pupils' personal development, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, curriculum and planning documents, observation of the school at work, interviews with staff, governors and pupils and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Mitchell Brook Primary School is a large school serving a diverse community, in an area that is distinctive by the high levels of deprivation and social disadvantage. As they enter the nursery, children's skills and understanding are well below those typical of the age group. Three-quarters of all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, almost a third of whom are from families seeking refuge in the United Kingdom. Half the school population has English as an additional language and a high proportion is at an early stage of acquiring English. There is a high level of pupil mobility as many families move to the area on a temporary basis. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. The majority of these pupils have severe learning difficulties and/or behavioural, social and emotional needs. Wrap-around care is provided for children on weekdays and Saturday mornings. The school won a National Award for Community Cohesion in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. It provides a haven of tranquillity for pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds. One parent's comment, 'I think the school is doing all it can for the children', reflects the views of the overwhelming majority. Whatever their starting point, pupils make good progress throughout the school. This is because the school has a high level of expertise in providing support for children newly arrived in the United Kingdom. It is also good at meeting the specific needs of pupils from different ethnic groups and pupils at all levels of attainment. The school's outstanding commitment to inclusion is exemplified by the special base for pupils who arrive with little or no English. Here they are welcomed, nurtured and observed closely to identify their immediate needs. Many make remarkable progress in acquiring English and most soon settle in. The school is a harmonious community where pupils from numerous backgrounds get on well together. Pupils' personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects is good. They behave very well and are keen to learn but, despite the school's best efforts, attendance is below average.

Teachers make learning fun and set demanding tasks. This was reflected in one pupil's remark that she found the school 'wonderful and challenging'. Teachers cater very well for pupils who are at various stages of learning English, those with learning difficulties, and the more able pupils. They are very well supported in this by teaching assistants, learning mentors and staff with specialist expertise, for example in supporting pupils with emotional difficulties. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. However, the pace of some lessons is rather slow and some introductions are over long, resulting in too little time for pupils' independent work.

Pupils achieve well through the school. Their attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 is below average, however. The high rate of pupil turnover is a major factor. For example, 40% of pupils in the 2007 Year 2 cohort joined during that school year. An indication of the school's success in helping pupils succeed against the odds is that the majority, including those with English as an additional language, exceed expectations in relation to their predicted targets. The school keeps a careful eye on each individual's progress and use a wide range of intervention strategies to provide support tailored to their needs. This process revealed that girls outperform boys by a much wider margin than national picture. Due to some successful strategies, boys are much more engaged in lessons but improving boys' achievement remains a school priority. The school's careful analysis of assessment information also shows that, by Year 6 pupils are not doing as well in mathematics as in English and science. The new coordinator has helped to improve the teaching of mathematics and the impact of this is seen in lessons. Again, the school is aware that pupils' progress in the subject is not yet consistent across the junior classes.

The outstanding curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment. A well-designed programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education helps pupils to gain a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how to keep safe. Pupils were keen to explain the nutritional qualities of various foods, for example. They said they felt extremely safe because of the tight security and the number of adults to whom they can turn if need be. Pupils show a genuine concern for one another. They make an excellent contribution to the school and take their responsibilities, such as membership of the school council or duties as playground 'buddies', very seriously. They talk enthusiastically about how the themed approach makes learning interesting, recalling how much they enjoyed topics about the Tudors and World War 2. Pupils are also extremely enthusiastic about the wealth of enrichment activities.

The care, support and academic guidance pupils receive is outstanding. The exemplary wrap-around care pupils enjoy has a positive impact on their academic achievement as well as social and emotional development. Arrangements for safeguarding children are excellent and pupils are well supervised at all times. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. At the start of each lesson, teachers make the specific learning objectives clear. When marking subsequent work, they highlight the extent to which pupils have achieved them and provide clear pointers for what they need to do next.

Good leadership and management are successful in enabling pupils to achieve well. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. She has created a climate in which all of those linked to the school work enthusiastically to produce the best possible environment for the pupils. She is very well supported by the senior leadership team in the constant drive to reach challenging improvement targets. Although recently constituted, the team is already having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The extended services manager has received regional acclaim for his success in developing first class partnerships with the local community and outside agencies. Pupils, parents, staff and governors have a shared clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for further improving the quality of education. Self-evaluation is good and draws on the views of staff, parents and pupils. Governors carry out their responsibilities well, although some members are new and are not yet fully involved in the school's processes of monitoring and self-review. The school's track record, together with the current strong leadership, means it has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to progress well. However, because of their very low starting points, their attainment by the end of Reception is below the expected levels. Adults develop warm relationships with children and provide a very secure and stimulating environment for them. Areas dedicated to particular aspects of learning - such as construction, art, number and 'writing' - motivate children to have a go, and the sensitive comments of adults build their self-confidence. Every opportunity is taken to encourage children to express their ideas in their home language if they are hesitant to use English, and several bilingual adults are on hand to help them develop their confidence. The outdoor space provides some opportunities for children's social and physical development, although the climbing apparatus does not offer an adequate degree of challenge. Following the recent integration of the Nursery and Reception classes, planning has improved, but the process whereby assessment information informs day-to-day planning is not yet fully embedded.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics to bring them more in line with those in English and science.
- Improve boys' achievement so it more closely matches that of girls.

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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?	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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
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	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	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	1
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	1
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

14 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Mitchell Brook Primary School, London, NW10 9BX

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you and was very impressed by your friendliness. I agree with your view that Mitchell Brook is a good school and could see why you are so proud of it. The school is well led, and everyone who works there is keen that you all do your very best.

Perhaps the most striking feature is the way that children from many different backgrounds get on so well together. You make new-comers very welcome and it was great to see many of you acting as interpreters for the children who had just arrived from overseas. Adults take great care to ensure everyone feels safe and there is always someone to turn to if you need to.

During my visits to your classrooms, I saw how much you enjoy learning. It was good to know that you thought teachers make learning fun, at the same time ensuring that you work hard. This means that you make good progress through the school. Some of you do not do as well in mathematics as in other subjects and I agree with the school that special attention should be given this. Girls tend to do better than boys in the juniors, so that is another area for improvement.

Much of the school's success is due to the way you help things run smoothly, for example by being a school councillor or a playground buddy. Teachers plan a wonderful range of extra activities for you. You told me about how much you enjoy African drumming and I saw for myself the high standards in the lunchtime Irish dancing club. The school is a centre for community life and it is plain to see why Mitchell Brook recently received a national award.

I will remember my visit for a long time. I am sure that you will continue to work hard and enjoy school life and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Crompton

Lead Inspector