

# Alexandra Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101586
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bromley
<b>Inspection number</b>	307745
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Grove

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	144
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr E Allinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms M Lewis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 September 2001
<b>School address</b>	Kent House Road Beckenham BR3 1JG
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8778 4714
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8778 3668

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school is situated in Beckenham in south east London, in an area of some social deprivation. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. It has a specialist unit for autistic pupils with severe learning difficulties. Almost two thirds of the pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils are from a large range of ethnic minority groups, representing a higher than average proportion of pupils. A small percentage of pupils do not have English as a first language. The percentage of pupils with special education needs is a little above average, but the proportion with a statement is high because of the specialist unit.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Alexandra Infant is a good school with significant strengths. Its ethos is based on the headteacher's firmly held ideals about the education of, and care for, pupils. Consequently, the school has a strong focus on the personal as well as the academic development of pupils, and on attention to their individual needs. It is therefore no surprise that the pupils say that they enjoy their education and are very warm about the school.

The good quality of pastoral care is another very positive feature. Pupils particularly like the arrangements whereby they support each other. As one pupil put it 'Everyone in the school is a buddy to someone else'. Pupils value this responsibility and are pleased to be able to take care of each other. The school enjoys high levels of support from parents, with whom it has developed a good partnership. This is well characterised by the parent who wrote that the school 'is staffed by people who care and who are expert in their field'. There are also good links with professionals outside of school. This includes working alongside secondary, and other primary schools, for instance, to develop problem-solving in mathematics.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They are polite and friendly, chatting and playing together sensibly. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and is well fostered by the school's ethos. Lessons in personal, social and health education and in physical education develop well the pupils' awareness of issues of health and personal safety. The views of pupils are sought on a regular basis, for instance, they influenced the provision of equipment in the playgrounds. In lessons, good levels of attentiveness and willingness to respond to teachers indicate their enjoyment of school. Attendance is slightly below average; the school is aware of this and is working for improvement.

Pupils' achievement is good. Upon entry into the Reception class, the children's attainment is below national expectations. They make satisfactory progress, but by the end of the Foundation Stage, their standards remain below expectations. Results for pupils in Year 2 in 2007 reached higher standards than in the previous year. Their attainment improved to broadly average in all subjects, as a result of good teaching in Key Stage 1. The school is aware that girls performed better than boys in reading and writing, and is increasing its support for boys. In the present Year 1 and Year 2, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding, because teachers are building well on the personal and social skills developed in the Foundation Stage. The good quality of teaching and learning, and of the curriculum, is key to this.

The good relationships between staff and pupils are a strength, and greatly support effective classroom management. Good planning, organisation, and timing lead to well-paced teaching with a good emphasis on practical activities. This maintains pupils' interest. A good instance of this was in a Year 2 numeracy lesson, when pupils developed their understanding of standard length by joining two paper strips to draw and make a 'man' exactly one metre in height. However, when teachers make day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress in lessons, they do not record information about what it is that pupils do or do not understand. The result is that assessment information is not precise enough to plan sufficiently accurately for the next steps in pupils' learning.

The school has a clear focus on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy, but also pays good attention to other aspects of the curriculum. One very imaginative innovation, which excites pupils and heightens their enjoyment, is the project to produce animation films. This

develops pupils' skills in speaking and listening, design and technology and art, and also provides opportunities for team-working. The school has a strong emphasis on the creative aspects of the curriculum, involving art, music, dance and drama, and holds the Artsmark (Gold) award. Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils like the caring and supportive atmosphere, and parents are also very appreciative of the school.

The school's leadership and management are good. The headteacher is clear in her vision for, and direction of, the school. There is an inclusive ethos, because leaders are committed to equality of opportunity. The senior management team has taken effective action to increase practical activities for pupils and improve teachers' use of questioning. This has led to better results in national tests in 2007 than in the previous year. The school improvement plan includes appropriately challenging targets to raise pupils' standards. The governance of the school is good.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children's progress is satisfactory overall and they achieve particularly well in the development of their personal and social skills. However, by the end of their time in the Reception class, children remain below expectations in communication and literacy skills, and in mathematics. This is particularly true of boys. The school is aware of this, and is providing more, good opportunities for speaking and listening work. Teaching, and resources in the classroom and in the outdoor play area, provide a satisfactory framework for children's learning. The curriculum provides a suitable range and balance of experiences and activities, which provide a satisfactory preparation for work in Key Stage 1. There is good practical co-operation between the teacher and the teaching assistant which leads to flexible classroom organisation indoors and outdoors.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, especially for boys in reading and writing.
- Ensure that teachers make better use of day-to-day assessments of pupils' progress to plan the next steps in their learning.
- Raise pupils' rates of attendance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achieve well, and attained average standards in teacher assessments in 2007. This represented some improvement on the previous year, especially in reading and writing, which have been a focus for the school. The proportion of pupils who gained higher national curriculum levels improved in both reading and mathematics, with a smaller increase in the case of writing. Girls' standards in literacy remain higher than those of boys, but are slightly lower in mathematics. The school has successfully re-designed the literacy area to motivate boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those in the specialist unit, achieve well as a consequence of good provision to identify and cater for their learning needs. Those pupils learning English as an additional language progress well because of specialist teaching by local authority staff.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils contribute very well to their own and the global community. For example, through fund-raising activities, the pupils have raised sufficient money to sponsor a visit by a teacher from a school in Uganda. Pupils also prepare 'pencil boxes', containing small toys or trinkets as well as pens, pencils and rulers to send to the pupils in the Ugandan school, who greatly appreciate this support. There are in addition strong local links. For instance, the pupils make bird-scarers, to help to ensure a good crop of vegetables on the allotments near to the school. Pupils thus understand the benefits to people of a healthy diet. Pupils also have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Pupils' multi-cultural awareness is helped by the school's choice of work for them, for example, the work on China in Year 1 and on India in Year 2. Good social development results from group and paired work in classrooms. This, together with the development of financial awareness, also helps towards preparing them satisfactorily for their future in the workplace. Pupils show good social skills, but their future economic well-being is limited by the school's current standards in basic skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

In their planning, teachers are good at identifying clear lesson objectives. The pupils are made aware of the criteria for successful learning, and this helps them to understand the purpose of the work set. These factors contribute to the good progress made by pupils. Teachers set different tasks for different groups of pupils. However, pupils' learning needs would be better met if during lessons teachers assessed more precisely the next steps in the learning for different groups of pupils, including boys. Teachers make good use of resources, including the interactive whiteboards in classrooms. In a well-devised Year 2 lesson, for instance, the teacher used the whiteboard to show an example of an animation film made by pupils last year. This aroused interest and heightened awareness about the process. Longer-term assessment of pupils' progress is effective.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

There have been some good curriculum adaptations for particular groups of pupils. For instance, some pupils in Year 1 continue to be offered elements of the Foundation Stage curriculum in order to continue to prepare them for the expectations of Key Stage 1. Also, there is increased attention to speaking and listening work before pupils write, to provide more support for boys. The school provides well for the pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, with good support being provided by the teaching assistants. The school is resourced with a good bank of laptop computers, which allows for the development of pupils' skills in Information and Communication Technology, as well as enabling pupils to apply those skills in other areas of the curriculum. There is also good attention to environmental education. The curriculum is enhanced by themed weeks, such as 'Money Week', and by a range of visits and visitors, including artists. There is a good level of attendance at the various extra-curricular activities provided by the school.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Detailed risk assessment takes place. Assessment of risk is also undertaken with regard to pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, in order to ensure their safety in and around the school. These pupils receive very effective support from teaching assistants who enable them to take an active part in the life of the school.

Statements of special educational needs are comprehensive. Appropriate individual education plans for other pupils with special educational needs contain good short-term targets, which are checked regularly. The school gathers a great deal of tracking and assessment information leading to effective assessment of pupils' progress over time, and providing the basis for effective target-setting for them. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work, and offer them positive comments. Much guidance on progress is also provided through oral feedback on pupils' written work. For writing, pupils have individual targets, which help them understand how to improve their work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The vision for the school is fully embraced by the deputy and assistant headteachers, who share in the leadership. They provide good support for the headteacher, and have a strong and successful focus on developing pupils' personal skills and their self-esteem and confidence. The school's self-evaluation is effective. They have also analysed effectively what is needed to improve pupils' academic attainment, as is shown by the improved results in national tests in 2007. As a consequence, pupils and their parents pay tribute to the good quality of care and education. The leadership's commitment to an inclusive school is shown, for instance, in the attainment of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds which is similar to that of other groups. The school is keen to promote inclusion further, for example through the focus on the opportunities for boys and for gifted and talented pupils. The headteacher has used techniques of coaching and mentoring to improve and develop teachers' skills, which shows in the good quality of present teaching and learning. The success in these areas indicates a good capacity to make further improvements. Governors are very supportive of the school, and show a clear understanding of the importance of a strategic overview. They are keen to challenge as well as to support the school. They are developing their capacity to play the role of 'critical friend'.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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	2
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

15 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Alexandra Infant School, Beckenham, BR3 1JG

We would like to thank all of you, and your teachers, for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you at work in your classrooms and talking to you at playtimes and lunchtimes. We think Alexandra Infant is a good school and a happy place. Children are friendly to each other. One Year 2 child said 'Everyone in the school is a buddy to someone else'.

These are the things we most liked:

- You enjoy school, and you behave well indoors and outdoors.
- Your headteacher is good at her job. She knows what is good about your school and she wants to make it better.
- You get good teaching and as a result most of you are making good progress.
- You have very good relationships with the adults in your school. They take good care of you, and that helps you to learn well.
- Teachers plan all kinds of interesting and exciting ways for you to learn.
- You are getting a good chance to do things like art, music and drama as well as literacy and numeracy.
- More of you are getting better results in the Year 2 teacher assessments in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Your mums and dads are pleased with the school.

We have asked your school to:

- help all of you to go on getting better at reading, writing and numeracy, especially the boys in reading and writing.
- help teachers to look at just how well you are getting on with your work, and then think what you need to learn next.
- help more pupils to come to school every day.

We wish you all every success in the future. Thank you again.

Yours faithfully

Chris Grove

Lead Inspector