

Smitham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101759
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	307796
Inspection dates	8–9 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	449
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lynda O'Neill
Headteacher	Miss Zoe Harris
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Portnalls Road Coulsdon CR5 3DE
Telephone number	020 8660 4399
Fax number	020 8763 0974

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils in this larger than average primary school are primarily of White British heritage. There are above average numbers of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and this is increasing. However, the number of pupils with English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but increasing, as is the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need. These groups of pupils have specific learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. More pupils than normal join the school other than in Year 1. The school runs a breakfast club in partnership with another local school. During the inspection there were no children attending the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) because home visits were taking place. The school has been nationally recognised through the Activemark, the Healthy School and Basic Skills awards and is an Investors in People organisation. Since the last inspection a new headteacher and deputy head have been appointed.

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 provides a satisfactory education. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Good leadership by the headteacher and her deputy ensures a culture where pupils feel safe and valued. Consequently, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils respond positively to the good curriculum and particularly enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided for them, including residential trips. Pupils benefit from the use of a good range of external partnerships, including the local sports college.

At the end of Year 6 pupils reach the standards expected for their age. This represents satisfactory achievement for these pupils and reflects the success of school initiatives that have reversed the dip in test results over recent years. For example, standards of boys' writing have improved. This is because they are motivated by the introduction of new, more appealing topics, for example, dinosaurs. However, higher attaining pupils are not consistently achieving the levels that they should reach. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above those expected of Year 2 pupils in reading and mathematics, although not enough pupils reached the higher levels in writing.

Pupils enjoy school. Another success of the school has been in improving attendance rates, which are now above average. Pupils know how to keep healthy and safe. They are active during playtimes and are rightly proud of the good range of climbing equipment sited around the extensive and well kept school grounds. Parents praise the community feel to the school. One described the school as having, 'strong core values, a sense of community and togetherness'. Pupils contribute well to the school and local community. For example, Year 6 pupils plan and organise a senior citizen party at harvest time.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. At this early part of the year, teachers have established very positive relationships with pupils who are consequently prepared to get involved. Pupil management skills are effective in ensuring a pleasant learning environment in which pupils settle quickly to their work. Progress slows on occasions because teachers do not consistently use assessment data to plan work that challenges all pupils, including those of high ability.

Pastoral care is good. Adults know the pupils well and work closely with parents to make sure pupils are well looked after. Many comments from parents highlight the approachability of the headteacher and her staff. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory.

The headteacher has successfully distributed responsibility more widely; managers are involved in the well-established monitoring cycle. This helps them to identify relevant areas for development. Some subject improvement plans do not identify clear starting points against which the impact on standards of any initiatives can be easily measured. Governance is satisfactory. Changes to the management structure along with improvements to the curriculum, assessment procedures and the tracking of pupils' progress have all had a positive effect on standards and pupils' achievement. This reflects a good capacity to improve the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

During the inspection, no children were present in either Nursery or Reception. Staff were conducting home visits that ensure the establishment of smooth links between home and school, and help the children settle more easily when they do start. Consequently, there was insufficient evidence upon which to make judgements about current standards and the overall effectiveness of provision. Scrutiny of documentation and children's work from last year show

that when they left the Foundation Stage the children had skills and knowledge that were above the levels expected of five-year-olds in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. However, it is not possible to judge their overall progress. This is because the school has not been sufficiently rigorous in establishing base line assessments of what the children know and can do when they first start at school. There are plans in place to do this in the present year. There is evidence to show that children are regularly observed and that these observations are used to plan the next steps in their learning. There is good provision and resources for both indoor and outdoor learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that children's progress is more accurately tracked through the establishment of a more rigorous baseline assessment on their entry to Reception.
- Improve standards and achievement through teachers using assessment data to accurately plan work for pupils of different abilities, particularly high attainers.
- Ensure that leaders in development planning identify measurable starting points against which the impact on standards can be judged.

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

In 2007, pupils in Year 6 attained average standards in English and mathematics although science was slightly below. This reflected unsatisfactory achievement for a significant number of pupils. In particular, pupils entitled to free school meals did not achieve as well as others. The school worked methodically and successfully to improve pupils' achievement and has reversed the trend of decline in standards. For example, the introduction of regular progress meetings helps ensure the quick identification of any pupils requiring additional support. Pupils now achieve satisfactorily, including those entitled to free school meals, those with learning difficulties and ethnic minority pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

As one parent wrote, 'Children and their views are valued - as demonstrated by the 'soap box' assembly'. Here, pupils are given good opportunities to voice their opinions on matters that concern them. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour is good in class, around the school and at playtimes. Pupils develop a good understanding of healthy eating, know the importance of exercise and actively participate in a wide range of sports and other planned activities. They take seriously their responsibilities as playground buddies, whilst school council members have participated in decisions concerning the school sign and 'golden rules'. Pupils attending the breakfast club get a good start to their day and show enjoyment at the various activities that are on offer. Pupils' satisfactorily develop basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT) and have a sound basis for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers involve pupils well in interactive white board work that adds pace to lessons. Other resources, such as number cards in mathematics are easily available, and allow pupils to quickly access their learning tasks. Whilst conversations with teaching assistants take place prior to lessons, on occasions, lesson plans do not always clearly identify the learning expectations and levels of challenge for their pupil groups. Teachers motivate pupils well through delivering lessons in an enthusiastic manner. There are variations across classes in the rate of pupils' progress because teachers are not using assessment data consistently to provide the right level of challenge for all pupils. Additionally, not all teachers use questioning that consistently probes and challenges pupils' understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Senior leaders have overseen a successful review of the curriculum that has improved standards and achievement. Science standards have recovered well because of the introduction of more investigations, which challenge and motivate pupils. Planning is carefully monitored to ensure that subjects offer increasing challenge across the school. However, there is insufficient guidance as to how pupils, such as high achievers, can be particularly challenged. Good links between subjects have been developed, resulting in learning being more meaningful and engaging. One geography topic involves good links with mathematics, for example, by requiring pupils to measure distances using different scales. There are further links with Aboriginal art, ICT and science work. Pupils' skills, knowledge and their enjoyment are well developed because enhancement, in the form of theme days and weeks, visits, and visitors is very good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Parents and pupils rightly speak of the high quality of pastoral care and sense of community. One parent wrote, 'The school is extremely friendly and inclusive', and another commented that, 'the partnerships between staff, pupils and parents work really well'. The school uses a wide range of external agencies or finds suitable activities to help pupils who are not coping. For example, pupils tell of the 'Lunch Club' as being effective in managing any over-boisterous play. Vulnerable children are particularly well supported. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Staff are getting to grips with new assessment systems that track pupils' progress. However, not all teachers are using such data to match work accurately to pupils' needs, and consequently pupils' progress slows in some lessons. Work is regularly marked but some teachers miss opportunities to challenge pupils and to show them how to improve their work. Pupils usually know their learning targets and find them helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The senior leadership team has given good, clear direction to school development. New arrangements ensure that the school has a wide range of assessment data; this underpins the

progress meetings that help support underachieving pupils. More work is required to embed the use of such data by teachers in planning work for pupils of different abilities. A regular cycle of monitoring and evaluation is in place. This has led to improvement. For example, regular teaching observations take place and teachers benefit from valuable feedback. Consequently, more good teaching is being observed. The impact of some new initiatives and actions cannot always be measured because leaders have not established clear starting points against which progress can be measured, and the impact on standards accurately identified. Performance management is linked well to professional development. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory, through its links with local schools and the wider global community, such as a charity in South Africa.

Governors visit regularly, thereby building a sound knowledge of the school. However, they insufficiently challenge the school over academic standards and achievement levels. This partly reflects the need for further training in how to use national assessment data.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	IE ²
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	IE ²
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	IE ²
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	IE ²
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	IE ²
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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	3

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.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

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	2
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 learners' needs?	3
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?	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	3
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	3
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**

23 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Smitham Primary School, Coulsdon, CR5 3DE

Thank you for making us feel welcome during our recent visit to your school. You were eager to tell us your views and we listened carefully to what you had to say. I am writing to you to tell you about our findings. Yours is a satisfactory school, which means it does some things well, and that other things could be even better.

These are some of the good things about your school.

- You behave well and know how to stay safe and healthy. You said you realised how lucky you were to have such lovely school grounds and lots of play equipment. Keep using it!
- It helps you develop well as young people. You are eager to help and you are rightly proud of the contribution of the school council.
- The way adults care so much for you and look after you so well. You told us how safe you feel and that the adults respect and listen to you.
- That you told us how much you enjoy the various activities the school provides for you.
- That because of better teaching you are now making better progress in your work.

Your headteacher and her staff work hard to keep improving things for you. We have asked them to look at three things:

- improve the way teachers use the information they have about your standard of work to plan activities that challenge all of you and help you to progress faster
- to ensure that when the adults who have responsibility for subjects draw up their future plans, they have a clear idea from the start how they can measure whether they are successful or not
- when children enter Reception, we have asked your teachers to record what the children know and are able to do, to help them work out how much progress the children make.

Again, thank you for your help. The other inspectors and I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector