

Forestdale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101773
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	307799
Inspection date	19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheena MacDonald HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Passfield
Headteacher	Mr A Conway
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Pixton Way Croydon CR0 9JE
Telephone number	020 8657 0924
Fax number	020 8657 2515

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector focused in particular on the effectiveness of action taken to reduce attainment gaps, particularly for younger boys, incoming pupils and pupils with learning difficulties; how well the provision is meeting the needs of all pupils and how effective are leaders and managers in evaluating and pursuing areas identified for improvement. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Forestdale is an average sized primary school whose pupils increasingly come from a diverse mix of backgrounds. Just over half are White British with the others representing several ethnic heritages, mainly Black African. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just above average as is the proportion of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. A high number of pupils join or leave the school at times other than at the usual times. Breakfast, after school and holiday clubs operate on the school site. The school has achieved Artsmark Silver, Healthy Schools Award, Basic skills Quality Mark, Sportsmark and Effective Early Learning Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Forestdale is a good school, which lives up to its motto of 'all different, all special, all achieving'. Relationships are characterised by courtesy, mutual respect and a celebration of cultural diversity. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of school life and 100% say that their children enjoy coming to school. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Parents also appreciate the opportunities they have to become involved or extend their own learning.

The school is rapidly improving and one parent, who commented, 'The headteacher is a great asset to the school,' spoke for many parents, staff and pupils. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management. In a relatively short time he has brought a sense of urgency and sharp direction to raising standards and accelerating the progress of pupils without losing sight of the importance of ensuring the personal wellbeing of all. In this, he is by no means a one-man band. An enthusiastic senior leadership team is developing good skills to ensure that the sharply focused improvement plan is rigorously implemented and carefully evaluated.

When children arrive in school, many have lower than the expected skills for their age. They achieve well throughout the Foundation year and reach average levels when they move into Year 1. Standards in Key Stage 1 have risen for the third year running and are now just above national averages. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been above average in most years prior to 2007 and this represented good achievement from pupils' starting points. However, throughout Key Stage 2, standards were dipping and progress had slowed for some groups. This trend has been reversed and current attainment is rising to above average and progress is good.

Recently introduced and rigorous systems for assessing, tracking and evaluating the progress of each child are driving improvement. The school now knows each child, their rate of progress and their individual needs very well. There is no hiding place! The information is well used to inform teachers' planning, to provide effective catch up for those who are falling behind and enrichment group work. Much improved intervention and support systems mean that pupils with learning difficulties, and those whose first language is not English, receive increasingly well targeted support and make good progress.

All aspects of pupils' personal development and well-being are good and behaviour is excellent. Pupils are very well cared for and confident that school is a safe and happy place. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and punctuality and have made good progress so that attendance rates are now satisfactory. Pupils enthusiastically take on a range of responsibilities and the school council is influential. There are still too few opportunities for pupils to work independently, use their initiative and develop decision making skills.

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils commented that 'teachers make learning fun so that we are interested and learn better.' Relationships are good and pupils are keen to learn. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, be active learners and do work which provides the right amount of challenge for differing abilities. In some lessons, the match of activity to learning need is not quite right and sometimes the pace of learning slows due to too much teacher talk and over direction. Teaching assistants give good support. There are some good examples where pupils have become involved in assessing and planning the next steps in their own learning. Where this happens they make rapid progress but this is inconsistent across the school.

The curriculum is good and well adapted to meet the needs of various groups including those with learning difficulties. Over the past year, a focus on raising achievement in writing, particularly for boys, has proved successful. Part of this success is due to teachers making good links with other subjects such as design and technology to develop writing skills. The improvement in boys' attainment is most noticeable in the younger age groups where changes to the curriculum have made learning more active and interesting. Pupils spoke very animatedly about the theme days and weeks such as the recent very successful enterprise week when each class made and marketed various items such as bath bombs. Many pupils of all ages take part in a wide range of after school clubs. The school makes excellent use of its many links with outside services, neighbouring schools and community groups to enhance the curriculum and to provide specialised support and advice for particular groups of pupils. The school rightly has imminent plans to improve the curriculum to improve the balance of time spent on different subjects and make learning more lively and exciting across the school.

The leadership team have demonstrated that through sharp focus, rigorous monitoring and personalised support they can bring about rapid improvement. Although some are relatively new to their responsibilities, they are quickly developing the necessary expertise. Governors provide very good support but their role as critical friend to the school is less well developed. Given the track record over the past two years and the clear understanding of what needs to be done, the school has outstanding capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception class is an exciting place with lots of practical hands-on activities where children are nurtured, play together happily and develop a love of learning. There are good relationships between the school and home. Parents commented about how pleased they were with the way their children settled into Reception and the progress they are making. The team is well-led by the coordinator. Learning is well planned, activities well matched to pupils' needs and there is a good balance of independent and adult led activities both inside and outside the classroom. Although some improvements have been made, the outdoor area would benefit from further development. Staff know the children well and make sure that they get the right level of support to help them develop independence and also feel secure. The school makes good use of assessment information to target particular aspects in need of improvement such as language and literacy and the achievement of boys. Improvements to the curriculum and good quality teaching mean that all pupils have made good progress, particularly in communication and literacy. The school is well aware that these improvements are relatively recent and that there are other areas of learning such as mathematics where progress is slower.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve pupils more in assessing their work and planning the next steps in their learning.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their initiative make decisions and develop independence.

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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	1

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	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	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

02 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Forestdale Primary School, Croydon, CR0 9JE

As you know I visited your school recently to find out how well you were doing. I really enjoyed my time with you. Thank you for being so friendly, polite and welcoming, especially those of you who gave up part of your lunchtime to talk to me.

You and your parents told me that your school is good and I agree with you. First and foremost your behaviour is excellent. Well done! Everyone gets on well together and cares for each other. The adults work hard to make school a safe but also a fun place to be. The school is very good at making links with lots of different people from outside who then come in and add something extra to your education.

You are making good progress in your work and the standards that you are achieving are rising, particularly in writing. Your headteacher has developed a system for tracking your achievements very carefully and as a result the staff know you very well indeed. They are determined that each one of you will do as well as you possibly can.

School leaders are good at finding out what needs to improve, such as writing or the achievement of the younger boys, and then putting a plan into action to bring about improvements in your learning. They keep a close eye to make sure the plan is working or changing it if they need to. They have also improved the way they give some of you the extra support you need.

I have seen how well your headteacher and the rest of the adults can bring about improvements so I think the chances of the school getting even better are excellent. I have suggested two things for the school to do to speed this up. They both involve you so I hope you are up for the challenge.

- Involve you more in assessing your own work and agreeing the next steps in your learning. You can help by looking closely at the comments teachers make in your books and taking their advice as to how to improve your work.
- Give you more opportunities to use your initiative, make decisions and develop independence.

Thank you again for helping to make our time in your school so enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector