

Stag Lane First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102209
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	307932
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	395
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	Mr Vivendra Rathod
Headteacher	Mrs Nina Will
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Collier Drive Edgware HA8 5RU
Telephone number	020 8952 1475
Fax number	020 8905 6039

Age group	3–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves a very mixed community. The vast majority of pupils (96%) are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Those from Asian backgrounds represent 61% of pupils, and 15% are from Black African families. Pupils at the school represent 18 different ethnic groups, and more than 30 languages are spoken by pupils' families. More than 80% of pupils speak English as an additional language, and a large proportion of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English when they start school. About 4% of pupils are from refugee or asylum-seeker families. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is high, because many families move to the area on a temporary basis. Most pupils who join the school after the normal age of admission are new arrivals to the UK and speak little or no English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. This includes pupils with social or emotional problems, those who find learning difficult and pupils with communication difficulties. The school has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in Nursery and Reception classes, with a total of 141 children on roll. A privately managed after-school club uses the school hall.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stag Lane First provides a good quality of education for all pupils. Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, adults work together extremely well to ensure that pupils enjoy learning and get the most out of school life. The school's highly positive ethos of inclusion is much appreciated by parents: as one wrote, 'Teachers welcome all children with a smiling face and establish an excellent rapport.'

Children achieve well in the EYFS in relation to their low starting points. This good rate of progress continues through the school, so that pupils reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Most pupils learn in a language which is not their mother tongue. Skilful teaching and specialist support enables them to quickly learn enough English to participate in class lessons and, with continuous encouragement and skilful support, go on to reach the expected levels in reading, writing, mathematics and science. By Year 3, pupils reach standards that are in line with those expected for their age.

Pupils' good rate of progress is due, not least, to their highly positive attitudes. Through good teaching and an extremely rich curriculum, pupils develop an eagerness to learn, gain in self-confidence and rise to the challenge which most work presents. The curriculum takes account of pupils' diverse backgrounds and experiences, and is a strong factor in their outstanding personal development. They behave extremely well and thrive in the attractive, caring and purposeful environment that adults create. The school is a harmonious community in which all pupils and staff feel valued. Pupils' welfare has a high priority and they feel safe and secure. Through lessons in science and physical education, and a wide range of additional activities, they develop a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, and of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils receive very precise feedback on how they are getting on. Teachers make clear at the beginning of lessons what pupils are meant to be learning and then help them to review their progress at the end. A drive to provide clear guidance through marking has been successful, particularly in accelerating achievement in writing. Most classrooms abound with prompts about how pupils can improve their writing, although this is less evident in mathematics. Teachers set challenging tasks in writing but some mathematics work is easily completed by many pupils and this limits their progress.

The school has improved in leaps and bounds since the last inspection, due to outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher, ably supported by the leadership team, has united colleagues and governors in a concerted effort to provide the best possible chances for all pupils. The school is held in high regard by parents and plays an outstanding role in promoting community cohesion.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Under the excellent leadership of the EYFS manager, staff provide an attractive, secure and safe environment in which all children feel valued. Children settle quickly and happily at the start of the school day because teachers plan a range of activities that stimulate their interest. As they start in the Nursery, many children are at a very early stage of learning English, but they make very good progress because staff work hard to develop their communication skills. Progress is also particularly strong in personal, social and emotional development. About half

of the children in the Reception classes have come from the Nursery. Many of the remainder have had little or no pre-school experience as they start school. By the end of Reception, most children are mature and confident, and have formed very good relationships with one another and with adults. Although most make good progress across the board, children's early communication skills and mathematical understanding are below those expected by the end of the Reception year. Despite excellent teaching and a lively and stimulating curriculum, children's knowledge and understanding of the world, and their physical and creative development, are also below those typical for this age group.

Adults in the EYFS are highly skilled in observing children and recording their achievements, and they plan stimulating activities that are well matched to children's individual learning needs. Children eagerly engage in a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities. Profiles entitled 'My Learning Journey' for each child include very detailed records of their achievements. Parents are safe in the knowledge that their children's welfare is given a high priority and many paid tribute to the warm welcome and encouragement they receive from staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are sufficiently challenged in mathematics.
- Provide further prompts and guidance for pupils' work in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Building on the good start made in the EYFS, pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 3. By the end of Year 2, they reach standards broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing, mathematics and science. By the time the pupils leave at the end of Year 3, they are working comfortably within the levels expected for their age in English, mathematics and science. The school is particularly successful in supporting the many pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. As a result, most make good progress and some achieve very well. Pupils with learning difficulties also make good progress as a result of very carefully planned activities. A watchful eye is kept on the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Mindful of the national picture which showed some underachievement by pupils from a Black African background, for example, a concerted effort was made to ensure that this group progressed as well as other pupils. A strong focus on reading and writing has led to a rising trend in standards. The school has rightly recognised that there is potential for standards to be higher in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'Pupils enjoy laughing and playing together and are very friendly,' was how one pupil described the school. The school is justifiably proud of the harmonious relationships enjoyed by pupils and adults, and this is reflected in the very positive attitudes and behaviour seen during the inspection. Pupils relish taking responsibility and are particularly proud of the playground buddies, who help younger and more vulnerable pupils. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of right and wrong, and learn to appreciate and enjoy the wonders of life. Pupils' appreciation and respect for different cultures is evident from their everyday relationships. Harmony across racial and faith groups is promoted extremely successfully. Pupils willingly celebrate a variety of religious festivals. Shortly after celebrating Eid ul-Fitr, for example, all pupils delighted in taking part

in a Christmas production. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to demonstrate their independence. They have a good understanding of their role in the community through joining in local events and visiting nearby places of interest and places further afield, such as the Royal Albert Hall. Pupils gain a good insight into ecological issues through membership of the 'eco club' and by recycling waste materials. Their good levels of independence and their ability to work cooperatively, together with their rising competence in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, provide a good basis for the next phase of education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, lively and well-planned teaching promotes good learning and enables pupils to progress well. Typically, teachers plan thoroughly, use questioning skills very effectively, and share with pupils what they are expected to learn. Towards the end of lessons, teachers successfully involve pupils in reviewing their own and one another's work against specific criteria. An excellent example of this was seen in a Year 3 literacy lesson. With the teacher's warm encouragement, pupils made insightful comments about how oral presentations could be improved. Teachers usually match work well to pupils' needs, but there are times when teachers miss opportunities to provide more challenging work in mathematics lessons. Pupils who find learning difficult and those who are falling behind benefit from the skilful help of teaching assistants within lessons and in small groups. In tandem with the learning mentors, specialist teachers and support staff work extremely effectively with pupils who have social, emotional or behavioural problems. Similarly, pupils at an early stage of learning English benefit from the expertise of support staff, who teach them in small groups. Pupils' learning is enhanced by stimulating displays that provide information, celebrate their work, and promote self-esteem. In most classrooms, there are prompts to help pupils' writing, such as lists of alternatives for 'said' and examples of how to use punctuation correctly. Apart from 100-squares and number lines, there are fewer examples of such guidance in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Underpinning all that the school does is the aim to help pupils to live and work alongside one another as a tolerant and harmonious community. The curriculum is fully responsive to the diverse needs of pupils in this multicultural school. For example, bright, tactile displays record a range of recent festivals, a European Languages Day and the headteacher's visit to Kolkata. The employment of Somali and Tamil 'ambassadors' has made school more accessible for these communities as well as supporting pupils in the classroom. The school regularly participates in local community events which helps pupils to deepen their understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. The curriculum is greatly enriched by visits to local places of interest, and frequent visits by specialists enhance pupils' learning and personal development. Recently, for example, a theatre company presented 'What if it Rains?' as part of a walk-to-school initiative. Pupils enjoy a vast range of clubs including sewing, French, sporting activities and a homework club. They have good opportunities to practise and consolidate their writing skills outside English lessons, for example when writing accounts of historical events. Healthy eating is fully encouraged both in the classroom and in the dining hall. Explicit posters show other aspects of health and social education including anti-bullying guidance.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Through constant, rigorous monitoring, staff maintain a keen awareness of the needs of all individuals. Expectations for the behaviour and development of pupils are set high. The pupils know this and respond accordingly by trying their best. Pupils' safety and welfare are given high priority. While being securely supervised, pupils are given good opportunities to make independent choices. This helps them to develop their own sense of keeping safe. The care that pupils receive in school extends to their parents and families. The learning mentors play a pivotal role in this. Pupils new to the school are warmly welcomed, sensitively inducted into school routines, and settle quickly. The school provides useful guidance for parents on the importance of their children going to school regularly and this is reflected in the improving attendance of pupils. Information from rigorous and manageable assessment systems is translated into very clear targets and guidance, so that pupils gain a good understanding of how to improve their work. Teachers use a set of easily understood symbols in their marking, such as a smiley face indicating good work and a thought bubble where there is room for improvement. Pupils, as well as teachers, complete target sheets stuck into books. These provide a clear indication of progress towards specific individual goals. These strategies are proving very successful in accelerating achievement, particularly in writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership team successfully promotes a warm, calm and purposeful environment, at the heart of which lies pupils' academic and personal development. The headteacher and senior staff provide excellent direction to enable staff, pupils and parents to achieve its motto, 'Forever Learners; achieving our dreams'. Rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress and development results in accurate self-evaluation. Strategic planning to sustain strengths, and address any weaknesses, draws on the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils. A strong focus on improving standards in reading and writing by implementing a wide range of initiatives has borne fruit. There is a common set of values and a commitment to improvement. This was evident during the inspection and recognised by the award of the Investors in People standard. The school has moved forward on all fronts since the last inspection and has an excellent capacity to go from strength to strength. Leaders are aware that there is more to do to sustain the upward trend in standards and improve teaching so that it is consistently as good as the best. Every effort is made to reach out to all community groups and to ensure that pupils feel self-assured about their own roots and positive about diversity. Governors support the school well and are fully aware of its performance and areas for further development.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

05 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stag Lane First School, Edgware, HA8 5RU

On behalf of the inspectors, I should like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You told us how much you enjoy being there, and we agree with you that it is a good school. The headteacher and staff work very hard to keep you safe and happy. You get the help and support you need to learn and achieve well.

We were delighted to see how children and adults get on so well together. You learn a great deal about the traditions of different cultures. This gives you a really good understanding of the lives of other people and the many different religious celebrations that happen around this time of year. You told us how you celebrate Diwali, Hanukkah and Eid ul-Fitr, and we enjoyed seeing you dressed up ready for your Christmas play. You all waited so quietly outside our room that we did not know you were there! Your bright happy faces showed how much you enjoyed what you were doing for your parents and friends.

You all try your best in lessons and we think some of you could try some harder work in mathematics. It was good to see how much help classroom displays give you in improving your writing and we have suggested that teachers could provide similar help for your work in mathematics. You can help by continuing to work hard and helping one another.

Yours faithfully

Rob Crompton

Lead Inspector