

Earlsmead First and Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102219
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	307938
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2008
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	4–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	374
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Tullo
Headteacher	Mrs P Naish
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2003
School address	Arundel Drive South Harrow Harrow HA2 8PW
Telephone number	020 8864 5546
Fax number	020 8423 7725

Age group	4–12
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Earlsmead First and Middle School is a large school serving a socially and ethnically mixed area. About two-fifths of pupils are of Asian background and there are sizable groups of pupils from European, black African and black Caribbean backgrounds. Almost half of the pupils do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. These are mainly behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has a high turnover of pupils. The school holds Activemark, Healthy Schools and Investors in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Earlsmead First and Middle School is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Faced with some challenging circumstances, staff show a powerful commitment to pupils' personal and academic achievement. The way the school promotes community cohesion is outstanding, partly because of the excellent partnerships the school has forged. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and her deputy provide very good leadership and inspire all adults with their vision for the school. Subject co-ordination is much more effective than during the previous inspection.

Children enter school with skills which are well below expectations and many have multiple learning needs. The outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage means they achieve well and develop good learning routines. These stand pupils in good stead as they grow and, by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly average. It fell in 2007 due to weaknesses in science and these pupils' low starting points. Current standards in Year 7 are at the expected levels and overall achievement is good.

Pupils are happy with the very good pastoral care. They report they feel safe and are confident that their teachers help sort out any difficulties. Most parents appreciate the school's supportive ethos, one reporting, 'I'm actually shocked how well my daughter is doing'. Parents work closely with the school to set targets for improvement for their children; these provide helpful goals but their use by the school is inconsistent. Pupils' personal development is good and they usually behave well. They make outstanding contributions to the school, local and wider community. The school council is most effective. Pupils are proud to be elected and take their responsibilities very seriously.

The curriculum is good. It caters well for pupils' needs. For example, the school regularly celebrates pupils' ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. Teaching is good and provides an effective balance of support and challenge. Pupils collaborate enthusiastically in learning and, guided by their teachers, develop strong independence. Marking is satisfactory but does not refer closely enough to pupils' targets.

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection, especially through raising standards and achievement. This good track record and clear-sighted planning ensures that the school's capacity for future improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage leader is very knowledgeable and provides inspiring leadership, promoting very effective staff teamwork. Resources are particularly well organised and a stimulating range of activities enables all children, whatever their background, to undertake tasks with obvious enjoyment. They make particularly good progress in social development and achieve very well in other areas of learning because the adults are very skilled in assessing and meeting children's needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve literacy skills in order to help raise pupils' standards across all subjects, especially science.
- Ensure that the way teachers mark is thorough and regularly refers to pupils' targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter school with skills that are well below expectations. Because the school is so inclusive, the achievement of all groups of pupils, whatever their backgrounds or needs, is good. This is particularly the case for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.

Outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage gives children a flying start. They quickly settle into school, developing the good personal and social skills that are such a strong feature of the whole school. When they leave the Foundation Stage children's skills are below expectations but their achievement has been good. This good achievement continues in Key Stage 1, particularly as pupils make rapid gains, developing the early language skills which play an important part in promoting higher standards across the board. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are average.

Progress is a little less rapid in Key Stage 2 but is at least satisfactory. The consolidation and development of more sophisticated language skills in Years 3 to 7 is more challenging for the school. The lack of specialist vocabulary has been a limitation to science achievement. The school has analysed the issues that have proved a barrier and is taking rigorous action. Nevertheless, pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 7 and this is good achievement given their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds work and play together harmoniously and the school has a positive and cohesive ethos. Pupils enjoy school, have positive attitudes and the vast majority behave well. Attendance is broadly average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have keen awareness of their own beliefs and show empathy with others. Pupils contributed to the school's code of conduct and display a strong sense of right and wrong. They relate well and respect others, enjoying opportunities to work in groups and teams. They especially appreciate the multi-cultural nature of the school and enjoy opportunities to learn about other faiths and beliefs.

Pupils have a good understanding of the need for safe and healthy lifestyles and develop a good range of skills that will serve them well in later life. They make an outstanding contribution to the community. Pupils offer much to the wider community, supporting charities and linking with local organisations.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers clearly understand pupils' wide range of needs. They use this knowledge well to provide strong support for individuals, particularly through effective intervention strategies and targeted deployment of teaching assistants. The many pupils who experience difficulties, particularly in learning English, are not disadvantaged and, like their peers, make good progress in lessons and achieve well over time.

Teaching and learning have numerous strengths. Lessons are frequently collaborative ventures between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils. Effective planning ensures that all concerned know what is expected of them and pupils usually strive to meet teachers' high expectations. Most teachers manage pupils with quiet, firm assurance, even when occasionally faced with awkward attitudes. This maintains a positive atmosphere in lessons, promoting good learning. Teachers offer many opportunities for pupils to develop independence, such as a Year 6 science lesson where pupils selected the appropriate equipment and then worked harmoniously together to complete their investigations.

Plentiful assessment information is carefully analysed to identify possible under-achievement. Marking of pupils' work is frequent and encouraging but offers too little constructive advice. Teachers do not always make the clear links between their marking and pupils' targets to provide more effective academic guidance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad, balanced and rich curriculum that matches the needs and interests of pupils. It is enhanced by links between subjects which help pupils see the relevance of their studies. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn French. The school ensures that pupils' cultural awareness is developed through, for example, celebrating Chinese New Year. They have also explored how different nationalities such as Iraqis and Pakistanis celebrate Eid.

Pupils are motivated by the range of visits to, for example, art galleries and museums. Pupils in Year 6 take part in a residential visit where, in addition to taking part in activities such as pond dipping, they develop personal skills, like working together whilst completing team challenges. Before and after school clubs are a positive feature, however, the range of after-school activities is rather narrow.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a safe, secure learning environment in which all pupils can flourish and achieve. They provide guidance on how to be healthy and safe and teachers make lessons fun by providing interesting challenges for pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure and regularly reviewed and there are effective strategies to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families. Learners at risk are identified early and arrangements to ensure that they participate equally are in place. Inclusion is a strength of the school because staff have the skills, knowledge and expertise to ensure a co-ordinated approach to meeting pupils' needs.

The school works well with parents and outside agencies to ensure learners achieve well. Parents regularly attend meetings where, in discussion with their children and teachers, they jointly develop targets for the future. Whilst these targets have great potential, in some classes they are not re-visited frequently enough when pupils' work is marked.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy work well together; they understand the needs of a diverse community and have successfully ensured that pupils achieve well, often from low starting

points. These expectations give staff and pupils a clear sense of direction and the school works in close partnership with parents, most of whom are rightly confident that their children are safe and well-cared for.

Leadership has been strengthened since the previous inspection with an expanded senior team that closely monitors the school's work. Other staff now play a much fuller role in monitoring and supporting pupils' achievements in particular subjects and aspects of the school's work. This is a significant improvement since the school was last inspected. As a result, the school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and sets challenging targets and appropriate priorities for improvement.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is re-establishing itself after numerous personnel changes. Governors fulfil their duties appropriately and ensure that finances are managed effectively. They are well informed about the work of the school, meet regularly with staff and are currently investigating how to challenge the school more effectively.

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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	1
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	2
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?	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Earlsmead First and Middle School, Harrow, HA2 8PW

I would like to thank you very much for your welcome and helpfulness when your school was inspected recently. Earlsmead is a good school. You told us what a happy school it is and how you feel you are well looked after. The inspectors agree that you are well cared for and this helps your good personal development.

One of the strengths of the school is how well you get on with one another and your teachers. This helps you learn well and your achievement at school is good. The standards you reach are similar to most schools in the country. Teaching is good and you have an interesting mixture of subjects and topics to study.

All these strengths are due to the good leadership and management in the school. Your headteacher and her staff work very well as a team to make your school life fun and interesting. As in most schools, some things could be improved. There are two main areas that we have asked the school to work on.

- Improve your standards, especially in science where they are too low. You can help by working extra hard in science lessons.
- Teachers should tell you how well you are doing when they mark your work, so they and you can keep a closer eye on your targets.

Once again, thanks for all your help. It was a pleasure meeting you.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely,

John Carnaghan

Lead Inspector