

New City Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102734
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	308104
Inspection date	11 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	495
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Sceats
Headteacher	Mrs J C Withnall
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2003
School address	New City Road Plaistow London E13 9PY
Telephone number	020 8472 2743
Fax number	020 8472 8274

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- achievement and standards
- teaching and learning
- leadership and management
- personal development and well-being
- care, guidance and support

gathering evidence from performance data, observations of teaching and the work produced by pupils. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with parents, children, the chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. 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

New City is a large, inner-city primary school serving a culturally and socially diverse community that includes pockets of high deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. Almost eighty per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. This figure is about four times the national average. About a fifth of these pupils are in the early stages of learning to communicate in English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is about average. High proportions of pupils join or leave the school during the course of each year. The school has the Artsmark Gold award, the Basic Skills and Sportsmark awards, and is a Cycling School of Excellence. It has applied for accreditation as a Healthy School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

New City Primary enjoys a well-deserved reputation within its local community for the good quality education it provides. It has a number of outstanding features. 'The school is the best around'; 'my children have received the best education can offer'; 'a fantastic school with a great community feel' are just a few of the overwhelmingly positive comments received from parents.

The school has a good track record of ensuring that pupils achieve well. It consistently moves children from low starting points when they join the Nursery to attain average standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. This good progress occurs because pupils' great enthusiasm for school and love of learning helps ensure that teaching makes a real impact. Pupils' enthusiasm is fuelled by the outstanding opportunities available for them to develop skills and interests. In particular, the school offers a very wide range of out-of-class activities with a strong emphasis on the arts and sport. The school is justly proud of its sporting success and musical traditions. An unusual and outstanding feature of the activities developed to promote healthy lifestyles and improve pupils' personal safety, is the provision of cycling. Pupils of all ages receive regular tuition using bicycles provided for them. The New City Cycling Club, set up five years ago, has attracted a lot of publicity and benefits from substantial grant-aid. The recent prestigious London Community Award and the invitation for New City pupils to take part in the celebrations at the start of the Tour de France cycle race reflect the school's high profile in this area.

A further important factor in the school's success is the good teaching. Strengths include careful planning based on detailed assessments of pupils' needs and the range of techniques used by teachers to help make learning enjoyable. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils thoroughly enjoyed using a 'Shakespearian Insult Kit' as they acted out roles as members of the Montague and Capulet families during their study of Romeo and Juliet. Where teaching is only satisfactory the pace of learning sometimes slows when teachers spend too much time giving instructions. This means that pupils do not have enough opportunity to practise the skills taught. In these situations, pupils' impeccable behaviour means that, even when not actively involved in learning, they remain attentive.

New City Primary places a strong focus on developing pupils as confident, caring, and thoughtful learners. The outstanding quality of pupils' personal development is evident in the demeanour of its pupils, for whom qualities of respect, honesty and consideration for others are an everyday feature of school life. Pupils get on extremely well together. The school is very good at promoting and celebrating the richness and diversity of pupils' cultural heritage. For example, parents and the local community greatly enjoyed a recent 'International Day'. This contributed well to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is an excellent feature appreciated by the pupils. 'People really look after us here' typifies the sort of remarks made by pupils when asked what they thought about their school. Frequent, accurate assessments of pupils' progress, shared with parents, enable teachers to give very clear guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve their work.

The driving force behind the school's success is the good leadership provided. In particular, the headteacher gives outstanding direction. She ensures that this is not a school that rests on its laurels, but one that constantly looks for ways to be even better. She receives good

support from the committed and highly professional staff team. The senior managers work closely together to ensure that the effectiveness of the school is constantly reviewed and action taken whenever needed. For example, an evaluation of the impact of strategies designed to help improve pupils' levels of basic literacy resulted in a review of provision. Following this, during the autumn term 2006, the staff team trained to deliver a new, well-structured programme of intensive support to develop pupils' reading skills. Much of this tuition is given to small groups of pupils, thus ensuring regular individual attention. It is proving to be highly effective, and the impact of this initiative is now seen in the rapid progress made by most pupils. Those in the early stages of learning English do particularly well. It was gratifying to see a group of six of these pupils, who were unable to speak English six months ago, reading simple words confidently and writing clearly. The quality of this sort of intervention demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further. However, while monitoring is effective in informing the educational direction of the school, some aspects of the school's performance have escaped sufficient close scrutiny. For example, senior managers have yet to investigate the reasons for the considerable difference in pupils' performance in reading and writing in Key Stage 1.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are given a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage classes.

Teaching is good. Staff show good understanding of how very young children learn, and are particularly adept at looking at what needs to be done to help each individual to improve. This is often achieved through skilled intervention in children's play. The school provides its children with interesting and exciting things to do, both indoors and out, despite the constraints of its Victorian accommodation. As a result, the children are never bored and are always keen to learn. The staff provide children with outstanding care, guidance and support. They are skilled in assessing individuals' achievements and in using this information to plan what to do next. The result of this provision is that the children get on well, both academically and in developing their personal and social skills. However, by the time they transfer from Reception to Year 1 most children fall well short of the goals expected at this age. The monitoring of the progress made by each child is regular and detailed. However, children's levels of attainment recorded in the Foundation Stage Profile for 2007 are far too generous. An observation of these children, who are now in Year 1, showed that their levels of skills and understanding are lower than those recorded at the end of the last school year. This was not the case in previous years, when the Foundation Stage Profile assessments provided a more realistic picture of children's performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that senior managers closely scrutinise all aspects of pupils' performance.
- Review the end of Foundation Stage assessments recorded in 2007 and rigorously verify future assessments.

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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	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?	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
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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 the 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

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

25 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of New City Primary School, London, E13 9PY

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when I came to inspect your school. I am writing to tell you what I think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn. I particularly enjoyed looking at your work and talking to some of you. I agree with your parents that you go to a good school. There is so much I like about your school that I can't mention everything, so here is a list of what I think are the most important things.

- Everyone in your school is friendly and welcoming. Your behaviour in and around school is excellent. Well done, and keep it up!
- You learn well in lessons because the teaching you are given is good.
- The school organises lots of interesting things for you to do. I know that you really appreciate all of the extra activities provided for you.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are really well looked after.
- Your headteacher and the senior teachers who help run your school do a good job.

I would also like to let you know that I really impressed when I watched one of your cycling lessons. I wish I could control my bike as well as some of you can! I also enjoyed the hand-bell group practice. I understand that your performances are worth listening to. All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this I have suggested two things to do next.

- I would like your senior teachers to carry out even closer checks on the results of the tests you have to do. This will help them when they plan future improvements.
- I would like your teachers to look more carefully at the marks given to the children in the Reception classes, because they are too generous.

I am sure that you will continue to have great success in the future. With best wishes

Mike Thompson Lead Inspector