

George Tomlinson Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103075
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	308210
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Paul Dixon
Headteacher	Ms Amanda Stewart
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Vernon Road Leytonstone London E11 4QU
Telephone number	020 8539 3577
Fax number	020 8556 0327

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This two form entry primary school is larger than average. It provides an 80 place Nursery. Most pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Well over half the children join the Foundation Stage having a first language other than English. There are an increasing number of pupils from Eastern Europe joining the school across the year groups. Over a quarter of pupils throughout the school are in the early stages of English language acquisition. There are academic, sporting, business and enterprise links with local secondary schools, with additional sporting links through the Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme. The school has been through a period of instability with several leadership changes between 2002 and 2006. The present headteacher has been in post since September 2006. There have been many staff changes over this year. The school is part of the Intensifying Support Programme.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

After a period of falling standards and weaknesses in teaching and learning since the last inspection, the school now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The good systems for tracking pupils' progress ensure that teachers are now aware of what their pupils should be achieving. Teachers' own targets are related to the achievement of their pupils. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and the careful selection of new teachers has improved teaching, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress.

Although standards remain slightly below average, the achievements of pupils who were in Year 6 in 2007 improved on the previous year and were satisfactory overall. However, pupils in Key Stage 1 did not make sufficient progress because of weaknesses in provision. A well-crafted redeployment of teaching staff and support from the local authority has improved the provision for younger pupils, who are now making satisfactory progress. The majority of pupils now in Year 6 are on track to achieve the realistic but challenging targets set by the school. As one parent says, 'Achievement is improving.'

Pupils enjoy their learning, behave well and work hard. Those with additional responsibilities take them seriously, and the school council has helped to improve the playground facilities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they appreciate and respect their diverse society. Although they are developing satisfactory skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) to prepare them for their futures, they have too few opportunities to apply these within other subjects.

Teaching and learning are now satisfactory. Teachers have clear learning goals for each lesson that are shared with their pupils, and have a much better understanding of what the pupils should be achieving. However, this is not yet fully embedded in day-to-day teaching and learning. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of the quality of pupils' written work, especially the basic skills of spelling, punctuation, grammar and accurate vocabulary. Work is planned carefully and effective support is provided to meet the needs of different groups of pupils including those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Teachers' marking of pupils' work often does not give them advice about how to improve, preventing pupils from taking responsibility for their learning. Pupils have targets for English and mathematics relating to the next stage in their learning but these do not reflect individuals' specific needs. The school provides pupils with good pastoral care, guidance and support. Parents feel their children are cared for well and pupils feel confident to approach adults in school if they have a problem.

The headteacher provides strong and astute leadership. She has established an effective senior leadership team and is empowering more teachers to extend their management skills. The school's very clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and the rapid improvements that have taken place over the last year provide a good foundation for future improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

After an unsettled period, and with good use of support from the local authority, the Foundation Stage now provides children with a sound start to their education. There is now a stimulating Foundation Stage environment and teachers' planning is increasingly well focused on promoting learning through interesting and relevant activities. While many children enter the Nursery at a very early stage in learning English, they quickly grow in confidence and progress steadily in

all aspects of learning. In the Reception Year, children make mature choices about some of their activities and work together well. Free access to writing materials helps children to practise their skills, although many do not attain the expected levels by the end of the Foundation Stage. A new system for teaching letter sounds has been introduced to help in this area. Teachers promote good spoken English throughout the day, encouraging the children to do the same. They know each child's strengths and weaknesses and this helps them to plan learning at the right level. Standards were well below average at the end of Foundation Stage in 2007. Because of the effective acting leadership in the Foundation Stage and improved provision, children are working at the expected levels in all areas of learning except communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, where the improvements are too recent to have had an impact on children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils know how to write coherently with due regard for spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary and that teachers have high expectations of the quality of their pupils' work.
- Improve teachers' marking so that all pupils know how to improve their work and take more responsibility for their learning.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects.

A small proportion of 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

Standards by Year 2 dipped in 2007, especially in writing. This was due in part to the increasing number of pupils with little English language but also to teachers' lack of rigour in teaching pupils the skills they needed. This year, more pupils in Year 2 are working at the expected levels. Standards by Year 6 improved in 2007 but far fewer pupils than average attained the higher levels in science because there has not been a subject leader or a school focus on the subject. Pupils now in Year 6 have maintained the overall improvement. Teachers have higher expectations of what their pupils can achieve and have set more challenging targets for this year's cohort. Achievement is satisfactory throughout the school but progress has been slower in writing than in reading and mathematics because teachers do not expect enough of their pupils' writing accuracy.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, and sense of well-being are good. Pupils behave well and enjoy their learning. One older pupil commented 'Education is better now. People are more interested in work. It helps us remember it.'

Pupils are polite and helpful to visitors, and collaborate well when they work in groups. Those with extra responsibilities, such as prefects, playground friends and the school council, make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school. This develops many of the personal and social skills necessary for their future economic well-being. Pupils have a good understanding

of right and wrong, and a strong sense of honesty and fairness. They appreciate the cultural history and diversity of the country and their community, supported through engaging activities such as Black History Month. Sports clubs are well attended. Pupils know how to keep safe and healthy, although they can be tempted to choose less healthy options at lunchtimes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and create an interesting and stimulating environment for learning. Lessons in all years are structured with a clear purpose and teachers use the interactive whiteboards well to aid learning. Activities are carefully prepared and organised and teachers are increasingly accommodating pupils' different learning styles. Teaching assistants give good support to individuals and groups as they work, but this support is sometimes less effective during class discussions. Tasks are adjusted for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and for more able pupils, although sometimes not enough is expected of these pupils, notably in science. Marking praises success and effort but often lacks rigour in encouraging well-written English and identifying how pupils can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is a broad curriculum, reflecting government guidance, although staffing difficulties have resulted in a temporary decline in provision for music. The school has sensibly focused on provision for English and mathematics, including a structured programme for improving reading throughout the school. This is leading to improved standards. However, although there is sound provision for teaching basic writing skills, teachers do not always ensure that pupils write accurately. Because there has been no leadership for science, there has been limited planning for the most able pupils, resulting in a dip in the number of pupils attaining the higher levels. There are few planned links between subjects to enable pupils to use their skills purposefully, especially their numeracy and ICT skills. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. French lessons are a valuable addition to the curriculum for Years 3 to 5. The school organises a stimulating range of visits and visitors and a range of after-class activities, with strengths in sports.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory care guidance and support for its pupils. It carefully checks the credentials of adults working with pupils, and identifies any safety risks that might arise in school or on outside. Staff are alert to the importance of identifying any indicators of abuse or neglect, and they collaborate quickly and effectively with outside agencies where necessary. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified quickly, and plans agreed to help them progress. There is good support for those with EAL, including individual classroom support, extra small group lessons and help from other pupils speaking the same language. Each pupil's progress in English and mathematics is regularly monitored, helping to ensure lessons meet their needs and to identify the next steps in learning. However, pupils have insufficient guidance about how to improve their work. They have general targets for improvement but these are not specific to each individual pupil's needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has been through turbulent times since the last inspection. The frequent leadership changes made it difficult for the school to maintain a sense of direction and teachers lacked the challenges they needed to maintain a commitment to raising standards. The new headteacher has grasped the nettle and has generated a management structure to support her in stabilising and improving provision. With the support of the local authority, teaching and learning across the school have improved significantly and the Foundation Stage now provides children with an effective start to their education. Rigorous monitoring of all aspects of the school's work identified what needed improving and all teachers are now accountable for their pupils' achievements. Advice has been acted upon swiftly and the school works well with other agencies. Parents' and pupils' views are sought and, when appropriate, acted upon. Resources, including staff, are deployed wisely. Although some governors lack experience, the chair has supported and challenged the school well and is ambitious for its future. This is now a school with a firm commitment to school improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 disabilities make progress	3

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	3
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	3
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 the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
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

19 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of George Tomlinson Primary School, London, E11 4QU

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you all and seeing how hard you all work. We know you enjoy school, not just because you told us, but because of your friendly smiles and happy faces. We were impressed by the way those of you with special responsibilities carry out your duties. A special thanks to the school council who gave us your views.

You have a satisfactory school. Your headteacher and other teachers have been working very hard to help you learn the things you should. We know that you are getting better at English and mathematics. Many of you enjoy writing long stories and we have asked your teachers to make sure your writing is well presented and easy to understand. You can help them by making sure you remember what you have been taught while you are writing. We want teachers to help you improve your work even more by giving you advice when they mark your work. Make sure you take it!

I know you are all developing skills in English, mathematics and ICT. We think you should have more opportunities to practise these skills in other subjects. This will help you get even better at them as well as making your learning more interesting.

We agree with your parents that you are well cared for in school. Many of you and lots of your parents say your education has improved over the last few months. We agree with you. Children in the Foundation Stage have plenty of interesting activities to help them learn. All your teachers now know how well each of you is doing in English and mathematics. This helps them plan lessons that build on what you have learnt. This means you make better progress. We know that, if you are all clear about what you need to do to improve your work you will be able to impress your teachers with your achievements! Keep up the good work!

Best wishes

Mrs Judith Dawson

Lead Inspector