

Hasmonean Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130998
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	315694
Inspection date	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Miller
Headteacher	Mrs J Rodin
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	8-10 Shirehall Lane Hendon London NW4 2PD
Telephone number	020 8202 7704
Fax number	020 8202 1605

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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: the achievement of the current Year 6 pupils, the impact of assessment for learning on accelerating progress, and provision and leadership in the Foundation Stage. The inspector also looked at the extent to which pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning in other subjects. Evidence was gathered from discussions with senior staff, governors and pupils, school documentation and observations of lessons and other features of the school's work. In addition, the inspector analysed questionnaires returned by parents and spoke to others on the telephone and in person. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

This is an orthodox Jewish school of average size. Jewish studies are taught by a team of specialist teachers alongside the secular curriculum. The school serves a relatively advantaged area but attracts pupils from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. All pupils are of Jewish heritage and most are of White British origin. The remainder are from other White backgrounds and very few of these are at an early stage of learning English. There are significantly more boys than girls in the school. Since the last inspection, the private Nursery on the site has become voluntary aided and part of the school's provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'Hasmonean is a caring and effective school', commented one parent accurately as this is an outstanding school. The headteacher has led the school very successfully for many years and is effectively supported by a talented and enthusiastic staff. They have established a caring and nurturing learning environment underpinned by strong Jewish values. At the same time the school is committed to providing its pupils with a rich range of experiences and to ensuring that they achieve as well as they can, whatever their ability. Consequently, pupils are proud of their school and most enjoy all that it has to offer. They are unfailingly friendly and polite. Pupils feel safe and secure, become enthusiastic learners and achieve exceptionally well. As one parent noted, summing up the views of many, 'It is not simply about academic achievement but the whole child. Children are given the chance to shine in so many areas'.

Pupils appreciate the many opportunities they have to take part in trips and a diverse range of additional activities in sport, music and the arts. These help to develop their talents and enrich their experience. The sporting activities in particular enhance their excellent understanding of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. Pupils also take their responsibilities around the school, as prefects and school councillors, for example, very seriously. The junior safety officer helps 'to make sure that everybody is safe' on the rather cramped school site.

Pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage and continue to make very good progress as they move through the school. This is because of their very positive attitudes to learning, a lively curriculum, which really meets their needs and consistently good teaching. In addition there are robust systems to track pupils' progress, which are used to set challenging targets and to identify any that are in danger of falling behind at an early stage. The school has been developing its assessment systems to good effect. This is ensuring that pupils know what they are expected to learn and are very clear about what they need to do in order to improve. This has made a significant contribution to accelerating pupils' progress throughout the school and has led to improvements in teaching and learning. Teachers use a variety of interesting strategies to motivate and engage learners. One Year 6 pupil commented, 'They always try and make lessons interesting.' For example, in Year 4 the teacher skipped to demonstrate the rhythm of poetry to pupils. In Year 1, pupils created their own story, which they were acting out and were later going to film. These activities led to motivated and engaged learners. A few parents expressed concerns about handwriting, which are well founded. Teachers' expectations of handwriting and presentation are inconsistent and not high enough in some classes. The school is aware of this and recently introduced a new handwriting scheme.

The use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning in other subjects has improved markedly since the last inspection through very effective leadership in this area. Staff confidence is much higher and ICT is used routinely to enhance learning in English and mathematics and in a range of other subjects. For instance, in Year 6, pupils were giving very professional multi-media presentations on a range of chosen topics.

By the time they leave pupils reach standards that are exceptionally high and within the top five percent of schools nationally. The current Year 6 pupils have achieved extremely well from their starting points and most are now working at the highest level possible for their age in English, mathematics and science. A few parents voiced concerns about the school's provision for pupils with a range of learning difficulties and with emotional and behavioural problems. Others expressed contrary views. The inspector found that pupils with learning difficulties are

very well provided for in lessons through work that is tailored to suit their needs and the very effective support of teaching assistants. Those who present challenging behaviour from time to time are managed very well. The appointment of key workers for these pupils is an effective strategy for helping them to cope with their emotions and to ensure that learning is not disrupted. The school also works in close partnership with a range of outside agencies in order to support its vulnerable pupils. Consequently, these groups of pupils achieve as well as their peers and many go on to reach levels expected for their age.

Leaders at all levels are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are not content to rest on their laurels. This is evident in the improvements that have been made since the last inspection, notably in the Foundation Stage and in ICT. A knowledgeable and experienced governing body offer a good balance of challenge and support to school leaders. These factors, together with the drive for continual improvement, suggest that the school is very well placed to become even better.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is much improved since the last inspection and is now good. When they enter Nursery, children have skills and understanding that are broadly average. They make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage and standards are above average by the time they enter Year 1. The Nursery provides a welcoming and supportive learning environment where children quickly settle and become enthusiastic learners. This continues into the Reception class. In both classes, staff provide a wide range of stimulating activities, both inside and out, which develop children's skills and understanding in all areas of learning. There is a good balance between activities led by the adults and opportunities for children to play and explore the world around them. During the inspection, there was great excitement in the Nursery as the chicks were hatching their eggs. In Reception, a new programme for teaching sounds and letters is being greeted with great enthusiasm by the children and is helping to accelerate their progress. Good leadership and teamwork has driven the improvements in recent times. Assessment is thorough but could be sharper in order to challenge the children to achieve even more. The school is aware of this and the appointment of a key worker for every child will greatly enhance this work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop consistently high expectations of handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work.

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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?	1
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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	1

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?	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

03 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hasmonean Primary School, London, NW4 2PD

You may remember that I came to your school recently. I am writing to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful. I really enjoyed my day at Hasmonean and I thought you would like to know what I found out.

You are right to be proud of your school because it provides you with an outstanding education. You told me how much you enjoy all aspects of school life and you particularly like the chances you have to take part in sports, trips and other activities. It is very clear that you know how to keep yourselves healthy and safe. I like the way you take on responsibilities around the school as prefects, school councillors and junior safety officers.

I was really impressed by your politeness, very good behaviour and enthusiasm in lessons. Well done! You told me how teachers make the lessons interesting. I was impressed with the way you are using computers to help your learning. I really enjoyed the presentation about jewellery in Year 6 and learnt a lot!. You make a good start in the Foundation Stage and make very good progress as you move through the school. By the time you leave you are reaching standards in English, mathematics and science that are much higher than in most schools. This means that you are extremely well prepared for your secondary education.

Your headteacher has led the school very successfully for many years and she gets lots of help from the staff and governors. They make sure that you are safe and well cared for. Together, they have done much to improve the school and are determined to make it even better. I have asked them to do one thing which I think might help and you can play your part.

- Some of your parents are worried about handwriting. I noticed that the handwriting and presentation in some of your books is not as good as it might be. You can help your teachers to make sure this improves.

Yours sincerely

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector