

Old Ford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131858
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	315881
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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	724
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms M Williams
Headteacher	Ms A Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Wrights Road Bow London E3 5LD
Telephone number	020 8980 1503
Fax number	020 8983 1658

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Old Ford Primary School is a very large primary school. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is very high. Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, a substantial majority being Bangladeshi. The majority speak English as an additional language. Most of these pupils begin school with little or no English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average. These difficulties largely relate to literacy, including speech, language and communication, and emotional and behavioural needs. A small number of pupils have a disability. Pupil mobility is high. The headteacher leads another local primary school following an agreement between the two and the Local Authority. The school has numerous national and local awards and has been designated a National Support School by the National College of School Leadership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Old Ford Primary School provides an outstanding all round education for its pupils. As a result, they make excellent progress, both academically and in their personal development, becoming confident and mature youngsters eager and ready for their next step in education.

Children in the Foundation Stage get a first-rate start to their education. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 have improved markedly since the last inspection when they were significantly below average. They are now in line with national averages and improving further. This is a remarkable achievement given pupils' low starting points. Excellent teaching is responsible for this. High expectations and varied methods ensure that all pupils are challenged and supported to achieve their very best. The success of the school is also down to excellent leadership and management. The headteacher has a relentless focus on raising standards. Her inspirational leadership ensures that staff wholeheartedly share her very high expectations. Hence, at all levels of the school, staff set very challenging targets to which pupils rise willingly.

An excellent curriculum does much to promote pupils' outstanding personal development. They benefit from rich learning experiences that stimulate their minds and engage their interests. Pupils' eagerness to learn is very apparent. They understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and make thoughtful suggestions on how to actively promote these. Sensitive care and support lead to a strong sense of well-being amongst pupils. They are confident there is always an adult they can go to if concerned. Despite the size of the school, pupils share a strong sense of community and belonging. Behaviour is exemplary and makes a powerful contribution to an orderly and highly work focused atmosphere. Outstanding links to external agencies and partners ensure that pupils' needs are fully met, especially those more vulnerable. Support for pupils learning English as an additional language is excellent. A learning support unit provides exceptional help for those with emotional and behavioural needs. Pupils who join from other schools integrate seamlessly into this vibrant and lively school community.

The school assesses and tracks pupils' progress rigorously enabling staff to spot and tackle any underperformance swiftly. Pupils receive very good advice and guidance on how to improve further and have a clear idea of the levels they are working at. However, very occasionally, written comments in their work do not set out precisely enough the steps they need to take to make their work better.

Governors provide excellent oversight of the school's work. Their active support for the headteacher ensures she maintains a clear focus on the core business of the school. Other leaders within the school have exceptionally well developed roles creating the capacity for the headteacher to manage another school. Governors and staff have an accurate view of how good the school is but are determined to raise standards even further. Given the school's outstanding record of improvement, it has excellent potential to become even better.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

When children begin in the Nursery, their overall development is well below that expected of their ages. They make excellent progress especially in literacy and emotional development, their weakest areas when they begin. Standards of work are improving and are now in line with what is expected. Stimulating and well-structured practical experiences engage children actively in their learning. Children often want to write about what they have done. The Nursery is lively

and exciting with much to explore. This encourages children's confidence and independence as learners. Work in Reception builds very well on learning in the Nursery. A strong focus on speaking and listening has a notable impact on developing children's literacy especially for those with English as an additional language or speech and language difficulties. Outstanding leadership and management ensure high quality teaching and excellent curricular provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils always have sufficient and precise guidance to help them improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Significant improvements have led to a rapid rise in standards across all stages. In 2007, results of external assessments in Years 2 and 6 were average. A high proportion of pupils attained the levels expected for their ages. This was a significant achievement when compared to these pupils' low prior attainment. For example, the Year 6 pupils finished Year 2 with results that were well below average as did the current Year 6. Standards are continuing to rise. In particular, an increasing proportion of pupils are attaining the higher levels, demonstrating the positive impact of the school's work with 'motivated achievers'¹. Though there are some marginal differences between different groups of pupils, all achieve exceptionally well. Those who find learning difficult are supported very well, especially in literacy, so that they reach creditable standards. Bangladeshi boys, whose starting points are often lower than those of other pupils, close this gap by Year 6. Pupils learning English as an additional language make rapid progress in English. They attain above average standards in mathematics and science. These significant achievements are a tribute to the school's work and pupils' eagerness to learn.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils flourish in the school's supportive and exciting environment. They respond with total commitment to the strong work ethic showing high levels of engagement in lessons. They are fully involved in the life of the school taking a lively interest in activities outside of lessons. They make very positive contributions to the smooth running of the school, for example, acting as playground buddies to support vulnerable pupils. The influential school council plays a key role in improving road safety around the school's locality. Pupils support a wide range of charitable activities and contribute to improving their local community, for example, by planting in, and caring for, public gardens, hence creating community spaces. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy. Their behaviour is exemplary and significantly enhances the progress they make. They thoroughly enjoy school and their attendance is improving well.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Pupils have a profound understanding of cultural differences. Their respect for one another's backgrounds is a powerful factor in the enduring relationships they form. They are very thoughtful and reflective about issues that touch their lives and those of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

High quality teaching and learning contribute directly to pupils' achievements. There are many examples of outstanding teaching. Teachers have very high expectations of the behaviour and performance of all pupils. Teaching and learning take place at a very brisk pace, ensuring that pupils learn fast and that they are constantly interested. Teachers pay much attention to ensuring that all pupils think for themselves and contribute. As one pupil said, 'There is no hiding place'. Throughout the school, very constructive relationships between adults and learners motivate all. Typically, classrooms 'buzz' with activity and purpose. Teachers are very good at explaining and modelling tasks. They set out clearly what pupils need to do in lessons to succeed. As a result, pupils tackle their work enthusiastically and confidently. Work is usually very well marked but, very occasionally, written guidance on how to improve is not detailed enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils experience an excellent curriculum that has a positive impact on their enjoyment and progress. A particular strength is the way in which pupils use their developing skills in English and mathematics to enhance learning in other subjects. Numerous visits to galleries, museums and other places of interest significantly enrich the curriculum. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, extended activities, including for motivated achievers, and residential visits provide exciting opportunities for pupils to learn new skills and to work collaboratively. The school's programme for personal, social and health education, and special events such as Cultural Diversity Week and International Day greatly develop pupils' understanding of the wider world and help them to become committed young citizens.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and a high value is placed on each individual pupil. The school draws on an exceptionally wide range of agencies and external professionals to support pupils and families. It is using every possible strategy to improve attendance and achieving success. Parents' involvement in their children's learning has improved markedly since the last inspection. Links with schools, locally and worldwide, and businesses in the City of London are of significant benefit to the work of the school.

Strong systems to guide and support pupils' work ensure they receive excellent advice on how to achieve within individual lessons. Excellent support and guidance to pupils who find learning difficult or those with English as an additional language contribute to their significant progress. Teachers' accurate assessment of pupils' work provides high quality information about progress which is shared with them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership and management at all levels have a strong impact on the progress pupils make. Senior staff teach regularly and maintain a very close focus on what happens in the classroom. The headteacher's exemplary leadership has driven the rapid improvements in provision and standards since the last inspection. A particularly successful feature of her work is the professional development of staff. These efforts, which include sending senior staff to research good practice in other countries, significantly improve the school's effectiveness. A very diverse mix of staff, including behaviour specialists, learning mentors and family liaison officers, are intelligently deployed to maximise their impact on pupils' emotional well being and, hence, their learning. Very successful checking of teaching and learning, together with excellent work to support individual teachers, has significantly improved learning. Governors are exceptionally supportive and knowledgeable and maintain a strong strategic overview of the school's performance.

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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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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	1
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

18 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Old Ford Primary School, London, E3 5LD

We enjoyed visiting your school and especially enjoyed talking to you. We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. Your school gives you an outstanding education and you make enormous progress. As a result, you reach the right standards by the time you are ready to leave and are exceptionally well prepared for your next school.

These are some of the best things about the school.

- You are eager to learn and to do your best.
- You make an excellent contribution to the community through the jobs you do around school, including as school councillors, and in the local community.
- Children in Nursery and Reception get a great start to their education.
- Pupils who find learning difficult and those who are learning English as an additional language do exceedingly well.
- Your excellent behaviour, sensitivity to others and responsible attitudes make the school a safe and happy community.
- Staff readily support you and your families in whatever way they can so that you are able to focus on learning.
- Your headteacher is an inspirational leader who expects, and achieves, nothing but the best.

The only area for improvement is for staff to make sure they always give you enough advice when they mark your work on how you can make it better.

It was very nice to meet you and talk with you. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Gulshan Kayembe

Lead Inspector