

Excelsior College

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	3096076
Unique Reference Number	102174
Inspection number	316929
Inspection dates	11-12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Excelsior College is a small primary school located in the Selby Community Centre, Haringey, North London. It was established in 1989 by the present proprietor. The majority of pupils are of Afro-Caribbean or African British heritage. The school admits boys and girls aged four to eleven and there are currently 11 pupils on roll. The school has a few pupils with additional learning needs, mainly delayed language development. This is the school's first published inspection report.

The school has a wide range of objectives, based on ensuring that pupils receive a good 'all round' education. The school also aims to encourage pupils to *'pursue knowledge and its acquisition with tenacity and for the purpose of fostering original thought and creating new ideas'*. The school seeks to create an *'emotionally stable, disciplined and ordered environment'*. The school's motto is *'We Must: We Will'*.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided at Excelsior College is satisfactory. There is an appropriate curriculum and satisfactory teaching. Pupils are generally interested in learning, especially in Key Stage 2. Overall, pupils are making satisfactory progress. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good. Parents and pupils are positive about the school, which has a good ethos and provides a good quality of care. It meets most of the regulations apart from aspects of provision for the youngest children in the Foundation Stage, the quality of teaching and assessment, and an accommodation issue.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. An appropriate range of activities is provided for pupils, but they say they would like more sport and after-school clubs. The range of educational visits and extra-curricular activities provided to enrich the curriculum is limited. There is a satisfactory curriculum policy, and schemes of work for all subjects taught cover the syllabus appropriately. The curriculum is generally matched appropriately to the needs of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is satisfactory development of pupils' basic skills, although opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) are limited. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall

and is generally appropriate to their needs, although this is not the case with the provision for their creative development and their independent learning skills. There are also insufficient opportunities for outdoor activities. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good and is rooted in the ethos of the school. The curriculum provides pupils with a satisfactory preparation for the responsibilities of their future adult life.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are warm, caring and respectful. Pupils are confident in speaking to staff and will share their problems and ask for help with their work assured that they will have a positive response. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, although there are insufficient opportunities provided for children to engage in independent learning, especially to develop their creative skills. The school has not yet succeeded in rectifying these and other similar weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. Teachers in Key Stage 2 have high expectations and pupils are consistently challenged to work to their full capacity. Expectations in Key Stage 1 are satisfactory. Most lessons move at a brisk pace but in Key Stage 1 time is lost because pupils become restless due to inactivity. Planning for lessons is variable, but satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 1, tasks are not always well matched to the needs of all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Not all planning is evaluated effectively to identify the next steps pupils need to take in their learning. The morning session is too long for learners in Reception and Key Stage 1. Planning is better in Key Stage 2. It clearly identifies what pupils are to learn and tasks are better matched to pupils' needs. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Key Stage 2, is satisfactory. Teachers are appropriately qualified. In Key Stage 2 they have good subject knowledge and make good use of questioning to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject being taught. The school is generally well equipped and resources are used effectively. However, there is insufficient large play equipment for children in the Foundation Stage. Teachers have effective systems for managing pupils' behaviour, which encourage them to behave responsibly.

Systems for assessing pupils' progress and attainment are inadequate. Assessment information is not used effectively to inform teachers' planning or to match work to pupils' needs. Standardised tests are used to assess pupils' non-verbal reasoning ability, but this is not related to their actual attainment. Pupils take national attainment tests, but this information is not analysed effectively to identify pupils' strengths and weakness or to track their progress towards agreed learning targets. Marking is not used consistently to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

Pupils make satisfactory progress. Progress is better in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Children in the Foundation Stage are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals for children aged five except in their creative development, where progress is inadequate. Pupils make good progress in the acquisition of speaking and listening, reading and numeracy skills. Pupils' progress in the

development of their handwriting is very variable and standards towards the end of the school are not as high as they should be. Progress in science and design and technology (DT) is good. Pupils' progress in ICT is inadequate, as they have insufficient opportunities to develop their skills on a regular basis. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making satisfactory progress overall, except in writing where progress is inadequate.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Older pupils are enthusiastic about their school and all say that they really enjoy being there. One pupil in Year 4 said, *'School is fun and the headteacher really helps you learn'*. Younger pupils are not quite so effectively engaged in their learning. The daily acts of collective worship reinforce the ethos of the school and provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. However, opportunities for quiet reflection and prayer are limited. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Pupils regularly give presentations in assembly, which has a very positive effect on the development of their confidence, self-esteem and organisational skills. There is a good atmosphere of tolerance and close racial harmony. Pupils are well aware of social and moral issues, particularly environmental issues and sustainability. They also have a clear sense of what is right and what is wrong. Pupils have a range of duties around the school, such as tidying up and looking after younger ones, which encourages their sense of responsibility. Pupils' behaviour and attendance are good. Attendance is monitored well and regular or unusual patterns of absence are investigated fully. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour, but when they do arise, they are dealt with fairly and firmly. Consequently, pupils feel safe and enjoy working in a happy, well-organised and friendly environment. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. As a result of studies in a number of subjects, pupils are developing an appropriate appreciation of their own and other cultures. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of public services and institutions in England through their work in history and PSHE. Pupils are positive about their future and feel they are well prepared for the next phase of their education. They have most of the skills necessary to ensure their future economic well-being, although their ICT skills need further development and their handwriting and presentation skills are not good enough.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Pupils are aware of the importance of staying safe and healthy. One pupil in Year 6 said, *'This is a caring school. We all feel safe and well looked after'*. Pupils are well informed about health issues through their studies in science and in their PSHE. Pupils are well aware of safety issues in DT, for example. There are good systems for identifying pupils at risk through informal consultations with parents. Health and safety matters are given a high priority and risk assessments are carried out effectively in school and for visits. There is very little bullying, but when incidents

occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Arrangements for promoting good behaviour are effective and as a result, there is a calm environment for learning. Staff are trained in first aid effectively and the incident book is kept up-to-date. Policies are clear and reflected in the school's good procedures. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are good and include external training for senior staff. The school has three-year plan for increasing access to provision, which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children meet all current requirements, including a single central register. The school has a good staff appointments system which ensures that appropriate checks are undertaken before staff are appointed.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are satisfactory overall and are used appropriately to ensure that pupils receive a satisfactory education. However, the kitchen is in urgent need of redecoration. The building in which the school is located was a secondary school and is well adapted for educational use. Although the building is used by several organisations, there are no health and safety issues as pupils are supervised well at all times. As the rooms used by the school are all on the ground floor, there are no problems with disabled access. Good use is made of the centre's gym and playing fields for sports and outdoor activities. There are suitable outdoor play areas, which are easily accessible from the school rooms.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a satisfactory range of information for parents, carers and others. There is an informative prospectus, which is supplemented by a full range of helpful additional information. Regular letters to parents throughout the year are also helpful and keep parents up-to-date about events at the school. The school recently held a 'Brain Gym' information evening for parents. Parents receive an informative annual report in the summer and have regular opportunities to attend informal consultation meetings with staff. Parents think that relationships between the school and parents are good. Parents were positive in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire. One parent wrote, *'My child is now settled in well and is making good progress'*.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has appropriate procedures, which meet the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- improve provision for children in the Foundation Stage, especially by providing more opportunities for independent learning so that children develop better creative and physical skills (paragraph 1(2)(h)(ii))
- improve planning in the Foundation Stage, and at Key Stage 1, so that work is better matched to the needs of pupils and the morning session is not so long without a break (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- ensure that teachers develop a good understanding of pupils' prior attainment and take this into account in their lesson planning (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- ensure that resources are of an adequate quality, quantity and range, particularly with regard to large play equipment for children in the Foundation Stage (paragraph 1(3)(f))
- improve assessment procedures, as required by the last inspection report, so that teachers have better information about pupils' attainment and are better able to track pupils' progress in learning as they move through the school (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- redecorate the kitchen as a matter of urgency (paragraph 5(q)).

School details

Name of school	Excelsior College		
DCSF number	3096076		
Unique reference number	102174		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1989		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 3	Total: 11
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,440		
Address of school	Selby Centre Selby Road Tottenham London N17 8JN		
Telephone number	0208 365 1153		
Email address	gilfillian2@hotmail.com		
Headteacher	Mr Gareth Gilfillian		
Proprietor	Mr Gareth Gilfillian		
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett AI		
Dates of inspection	11-12 December 2007		