

Benthall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100260
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	323252
Inspection date	7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Gordon Ewing

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	412
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Maurice Wren
Headteacher	Mr Tim Hunter-Whitehouse
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Benthall Road London N16 7AU
Telephone number	020 8985 9310
Fax number	020 8533 6003

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the standards achieved across the school, and the progress that pupils make
- the response of the school's leadership to the challenges of the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools
- the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those who are vulnerable
- the impact of leadership on the pupils' personal development and well-being
- the effectiveness of the school's academic guidance to pupils.

The inspectors met with staff, governors, pupils and parents. Parts of lessons were observed, 110 parents' questionnaires were analysed, samples of pupils' work were examined, and information provided by the school, including self-evaluation, was scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

Benthall is a large primary school formed from the amalgamation of a local infant and a local junior school. The largest group of pupils are of Black British origin, although several other minority ethnic groups are represented within the family of the school. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is very much higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is higher than in most schools. Most of these pupils have either moderate learning difficulties or problems with speech, language and communication. The proportion of pupils starting and leaving the school at other than the usual time is higher than that found in most schools.

The governing body manages the Benthall Play Centre After School Club for fifty pupils aged 6-11.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Benthall Primary is an outstanding school. Its motto, 'Aspire, Achieve, Enjoy', is being fully realised, and the school is held in the highest regard within the community. The overwhelming majority of parents and pupils show evident pride in all that the school does. One parent rightly judged that 'Benthall provides a safe, caring and stimulating environment for my child to learn and develop.' Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are very much lower than those expected for the age group in all areas of learning. Good provision in the Nursery and Reception classes ensures that children are well prepared for the move to Year 1 because the school has developed in every child an enthusiastic learner, even though their skills remain low.

In 2008, Year 2 pupils achieved below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, representing satisfactory progress from their starting points in school. Since the amalgamation in 2006, the school's leadership has taken clear and determined action to raise standards. This has proved to be very successful, and pupils in the current Year 2 are well on the way to attaining broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics this year. The school has a consistent track record over the last three years of ensuring that older pupils make outstanding progress by the time they reach the end of Year 6. Standards are above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. This is due to the good, and often outstanding, teaching, the impact of which is enhanced by the very effective and focused deployment of teaching assistants and the pupils' extremely enthusiastic attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language, make outstanding progress alongside their peers.

Attendance is satisfactory, and is steadily improving because the school is using very effective systems to follow up on absenteeism which are making a difference. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, and they talk very positively about the learning opportunities on offer. Pupils' personal development and well-being, as well as aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent, and pupils show high levels of perseverance and cooperation when working with their peers. The school council and playground buddies contribute very positively to the caring and supportive culture that permeates the school. The vibrant and dynamic curriculum is celebrated throughout the school through colourful displays of pupils' work. The curriculum is further enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular visits and well-attended after-school clubs. These bring greater meaning to pupils' learning, and extend considerably their experience of the wider world. Visitors representing different faiths, theatre groups and musical performers, among others, greatly extend pupils' experience and provide opportunities to learn additional practical and creative skills. The school grounds, including the organic garden, provide a very rich source of stimulus for learning, which is linked to many subjects, and especially science and mathematics.

The quality of care and support for pupils is outstanding. All safeguarding requirements are comprehensively met. Pupils report that they feel safe and extremely well supported. As one pupil commented, 'This is a really friendly school.' Vulnerable pupils receive excellent support from all staff, and especially from the learning mentor and mental health nurse. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others, both within lessons and at play. Relationships are extremely positive, and mutual respect permeates all aspects of school life. Several parents warmly praised the school's family atmosphere and nurturing culture. Within this very positive picture, academic guidance that helps pupils to develop as independent learners, and to take the next step in

their learning, is not consistent across the school. Teachers' marking is accurate, supportive and praising, but many opportunities are missed to use marking to set short-term targets and to provide pupils with advice on how to improve and extend their learning. The school recognises this, but steps to improve this aspect of guidance are at an early stage.

The outstanding senior leadership team has worked seamlessly to ensure that the merging of the two schools has not diverted the school community from its core purpose of raising standards and achievement. The fusion of the strengths and talents across the staff of both schools has been undertaken with sensitivity and rigour to ensure that leaders at all levels share a clear vision for improvement. As a result, standards are rising and pupils' achievement is now outstanding. Regular and rigorous checks on every pupil's progress ensure that underachievement is swiftly recognised and addressed. Consequently, pupils of all abilities, needs and backgrounds make sustained and outstanding progress. The school promotes community cohesion well, particularly locally; for example, in providing reading and mathematics workshops to parents. Governors demonstrate an astute and perceptive knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They closely monitor the work of the school with a balance of support and challenge, ensuring that the school's actions have an unequivocal impact on outcomes for pupils. Given its excellent track record over the last three years, the school demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children start in the Nursery with skills that are very much lower than those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy, and in their personal, social and emotional development. Close liaison with parents and good-quality induction arrangements to the Nursery help children to make a positive start to their learning. The supportive and nurturing ethos ensures that children's personal development and welfare are given a high priority and, as a result, they settle well and make good gains, particularly in their language skills. By the time they move to Year 1, children's skills remain below those expected, except in dispositions and attitudes, physical and creative development, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world, which are broadly similar to those for their age. Children are keen to take part in activities, and enjoyment is a clear strength. They are enthusiastic in their work and play. Good use is made of the spacious accommodation so that children experience a stimulating learning environment. There is an appropriate balance between child-selected and adult-directed activities. Teaching is good overall and children's progress is effectively tracked and recorded. This information is used well to adapt the activities to meet children's individual learning needs. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to use photographic evidence to effectively record progress in practical activities. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well by an experienced coordinator, supported effectively by the recently appointed lead teacher for raising achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of teachers' marking, so that pupils receive regular and focused guidance on how to improve further.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	2
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 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?	2

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Benthall Primary School, London, N16 7AU

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you, and your views have given us a lot of helpful information. We thought you might like to know more about what we found out.

Your school is outstanding. Here are some of the other many things we liked best about your school.

- You make excellent progress in all that you do.
- You are all rightly proud of your school and really enjoy your learning. We could see that you do!
- The school is led by an outstanding team, which is very well supported by the whole school community.
- Your attendance is improving and you behave extremely well.
- Your very positive attitudes to each other help the teachers to make your lessons stimulating and rewarding.
- The school provides you with lots of very interesting and exciting things to do, including an exciting range of visits and after-school clubs.
- Pupils take on responsibilities, including becoming members of the school council and playground buddies, with enthusiasm and energy.
- Parents and carers speak very highly of your school, and you report that Benthall is a very safe and really friendly place in which to be.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to make your school even better by:

- making sure that teachers' marking always gives you helpful tips on taking the next step in your learning.

We ask you to carry on working hard and playing your important part in making Benthall a school of which you can continue to be justly proud.

Yours faithfully

Gordon Ewing

Lead Inspector