

Simon Marks Jewish Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100275
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	323254
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Jo Curd

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	185
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 Peter Kessler
Headteacher	Mrs Nicole Delamere
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	75 Cazenove Road London N16 6PD
Telephone number	020 8806 6048

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2009
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Fax number

020 8442 4722

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most other primary schools. Although the vast majority of pupils come from Jewish families, many are not actively linked with a synagogue. All pupils learn Hebrew and Jewish studies. Apart from teachers of these subjects, the majority of teaching and non-teaching staff are not Jewish. Cohorts vary greatly between year groups. There are currently more boys than girls in nearly every class. About half the pupils are of White British heritage; others are from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Nearly half the pupils speak more than one language and few are at early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than the national average. A slightly smaller proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities than in most other schools. Most of these have moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities, especially in the areas of speech, language and social skills. All children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Nursery stay all day. About a quarter of pupils start or leave the school after the beginning of their Reception class or before the end of Year 6.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspection confirmed the school's view that it provides a satisfactory education for all its pupils. Its strengths include pupils' personal development and well-being and the way they are all cared for and supported. Achievement overall is satisfactory, largely because teaching and the curriculum vary between classes. Parents recognise variations in provision and outcomes. While the appreciation of many is expressed in the comment of one parent who said, 'I am so happy that my child is at Simon Marks, pupils are confident and hard working', almost as many parents agreed with the school's own view that it 'could do so much better'.

In recent years, the school has been going through a time of challenge and change. A new headteacher started at the school last September. She is already using her very accurate self-evaluation and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to reveal inconsistencies to other staff and to guide strategic decisions. Key improvements which she has already implemented include raising the quality of some of the teaching, taking very effective steps to address a budget deficit and developing the learning environment. These have all contributed to pupils' enjoyment and motivation. Other levels of leadership and management are less well developed. Until recently, these staff were not always encouraged, or knew how, to fulfil their roles effectively. Most are at early stages of monitoring, evaluating and challenging the school in order to help it develop and improve. The school's role in community cohesion is at a relatively early stage but links with some faith and community groups are good.

The quality of teaching and learning varies between subjects and classes. Some lessons are well planned, and expectations and aims for learning are effective. However, in others, work is sometimes either too hard or too easy and pupils are not always suitably challenged or engaged. The curriculum also varies and does not always provide sufficient interest, continuity over time or coherence between subjects. Achievement tends to fluctuate in line with the quality of teaching and the curriculum in different classes. Children generally join the Nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding that are typical of three-year-olds. Due to good provision, they achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and leave the Reception class with standards above those found in most other schools, especially in communication, language and literacy, and mathematics. At the end of Year 6, standards are generally above the national average, especially in English.

Despite these inconsistencies, most pupils throughout the school enjoy their time there. Relationships are good and pupils are well cared for and supported. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, successfully fostered through frequent Jewish prayers and rituals, is good. Pupils have a good understanding of and commitment to keeping themselves healthy and safe. They are well aware of the need for a balanced diet, exercise and hygiene. They play and work together safely in and out of lessons. They contribute eagerly to a limited but growing range of opportunities to take responsibility and help others.

The headteacher is identifying and addressing weaknesses well. Several parents recognise and welcome this. As one said, 'The headteacher clearly understands what makes an effective school and is driving practice in the right direction; we feel that under her calm assured leadership the school will move from strength to strength.' On the basis of its accurate self-evaluation, committed vision and recent improvements, the school's capacity for future improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the effective Early Years Foundation Stage. They are well looked after and cared for. The Nursery provides vibrant experiences and opportunities for all its children. Its curriculum is broad and balanced, and staff interact well with children to stimulate and extend their language, learning and thought. Children in the Reception class enjoy an effective balance of adult-led and child-chosen activities, such as learning the names and sounds of letters, building racing cars and working with a wide range of creative materials and resources. Resources and activities in both classes are engaging, well organised and accessible. However, some resources, both indoors and outdoors, are well used and slightly jaded. Children tend to start the Nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress and leave the Reception class with standards above those found in most other schools. Provision is good because staff are experienced and seek advice and support wherever necessary. Cohesion between the Nursery and Reception classes is fairly limited; the coordinator does not work in either class and the classes are geographically separate. While staff in the Nursery and Reception classes know their particular areas well, leadership and management of the phase as a whole is no more than satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the skills and roles of leaders and managers so that they contribute effectively to school improvement.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that work is appropriate for all pupils and is suitably challenging and engaging.
- Develop the curriculum so that it is more interesting, engaging and cohesive throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement varies between classes, depending largely on how effective the curriculum and the quality of teaching are. Pupils join Year 1 with standards above those found in most other schools, especially in English and mathematics. Most pupils make good progress in English. High expectations for imaginative vocabulary and analogies, a stimulating and vibrant curriculum, and effective guidance in some classes all contribute to this. While pupil mobility in and out of school is relatively high, pupils leaving and joining the school have a range of abilities, and the movement does not have a marked effect on standards throughout the school. There is little variation between the achievement of different groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well through support programmes but not so well when work in class is too difficult for them. Overall, they all achieve soundly. By the end of Year 6, standards are above the national average, particularly in English, where a high proportion of pupils generally reach higher levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident, friendly and considerate. They are keen to learn and behave well, even when lessons are not as interesting as they could be or when work is too easy or too difficult. High levels of well-being and self-esteem are successfully reinforced by the school's strong

ethos of inclusion and the positive relationships in the majority of classes. Pupils show concern and respect for others but have few opportunities to learn about a range of cultures and faiths. Most pupils enjoy most aspects of school. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils behave sensibly and safely. Although they are keen to participate in lessons and to help others, opportunities for them to contribute to their community in and outside school are fairly limited. Pupils serve with enthusiasm on the school council, however, and the school choir gladly performed at a local Christian hospice during the inspection. Their good behaviour, attitudes and skills will stand them in good stead for later life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning varies considerably between classes. In some lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations for pupils' achievement; they question pupils well and stimulate discussion of high quality and depth. However, in other lessons, teachers are not always sure of their aims or learning objectives, rely too heavily on the content and sequence of textbooks or worksheets, and do not always match work to pupil's interests, learning levels or styles. There are not always enough opportunities for pupils' independent learning and lessons can occasionally stifle rather than nurture pupils' interest and achievement. However, pupils are well behaved and keen to learn, and they make satisfactory progress over their time at the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

All required subjects are included in the school's broad and balanced curriculum. This contributes to their sound achievement and high standards. Music is a particular strength, which adds to pupils' enjoyment, spiritual development and corporate identity. Programmes to support pupils who find learning more challenging or difficult contribute well to their progress. The curriculum for information and communication technology is fairly limited. Additional activities, such as extra sports clubs, French and Israeli dancing, contribute well to pupils' personal development and well-being. The inclusion of Hebrew and Jewish studies strengthens pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development and their understanding of culture and language. However, there is little coherence between different subjects and too much focus on textbooks and work sheets. This reduces opportunities for pupils' initiative and independent learning and, when tasks are insufficiently adapted to meet pupils' needs, slows progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All pupils are cared for and supported well. Systems to safeguard their health and safety are efficiently organised and thorough. The use of photographs in risk assessments, and to record the presence and improvement of any potential hazards around the school or aspects which need repair or replacement, is imaginative and effective. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in class and in small withdrawal groups. A range of support programmes effectively aid their progress. Guidance for pupils' learning has improved recently, especially in English, where effective marking is contributing to good progress. In other subjects,

marking still tends to focus on praise, however, rewarding pupils' efforts rather than showing them how they could improve their work further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher provides impetus and challenge. Her self-evaluation is sharp and accurate and she has a clear vision for the school's potential and future. She has already spear-headed developments, including some building refurbishments, and higher expectations for classroom organisation and display and for the quality of some of the teaching and learning. Other leaders and managers, including governors, are not used to distribute leadership and are not yet fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as fully as they might do. Their monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision and outcomes, and their understanding of and skills to challenge and improve these, are at an early stage. Because the curriculum, teaching and learning vary between classes, there is not full equality of opportunity, even though all pupils achieve soundly over their time at the school. Relationships throughout the school, and with parents and other professionals, are generally good, contributing well to pupils' personal development, well-being and achievement. Although the school is still in a time of challenge and change, recent developments indicate an upward trend and good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

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

05 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Simon Marks Jewish Primary School, London, N16 6PD

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time with you very much, especially talking to you and joining you in Tefilla (assembly). All the things you told us about your school really helped us with our work.

We agree with you that there are some great things about your school but also some things that could be even better. We saw that you all behave well and try hard, even when lessons are not always very interesting or when work is too easy or too difficult for you. You make good progress in some lessons, particularly English, where you use interesting words and ideas. Some of your poems are particularly imaginative and powerful. Progress is slower in some other lessons and subjects. The different things you learn about, which make up your curriculum, are not always very interesting or well-linked between classes or subjects. Your teachers work hard and look after you well. However, some of them do not always carry out all their responsibilities to know and improve the school as well as they could.

We have therefore asked them to do three things:

- improve management and leadership so that all senior staff know the school well and are able to play a full part in developing it further
- make sure that work is suitable for all of you, not too easy or too difficult, and that it is interesting and challenging for you all
- develop what you learn, so that lessons are interesting and link well with each other.

Perhaps you can help by telling your teachers when you find a lesson particularly interesting or helpful to your learning, or by sharing your ideas on how they could be better.

Thank you again for your help. We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Jo Curd

Lead Inspector