

Grafton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100406
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	323271
Inspection date	13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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)	458
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	107
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Bloxham
Headteacher	Mrs Theonitsa Sergides
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Eburne Road Holloway London N7 6AR
Telephone number	020 7272 3284
Fax number	020 7272 5709

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- What is the school doing to improve attendance and what impact is this having?
- What are the key features of teaching and learning which ensure outstanding progress across the core subjects?
- What are the key factors in leadership and management that are contributing to the school's highly successful track record?

Evidence was gathered from the analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with pupils and discussions with teachers and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected 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

The school is larger than most primary schools. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than usually found. Over 80% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Over half of the pupils are learning English as an additional language. The percentage identified with moderate and specific learning difficulties, speech and language, and emotional, social and behavioural difficulties is very much higher than average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is much higher than that usually found. The school has attained the Artsmark Gold Award and the Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Grafton Primary is an outstanding school, led by an exceptional headteacher. She is extremely well supported by the deputy headteacher and a team of very talented and hard working senior leaders. Together they are a highly cohesive group of people who share a common vision, but more importantly, they translate that vision into action, which substantially increases the life chances of every pupil in their school. Their commitment and passion for their school is obvious. One of the key features contributing to the success of the school is the superb relationships the headteacher and her staff have built up with parents. Parents are truly involved in every step forward the school makes towards further improvement. In a recent 'Bring a dad to school day', dads, granddads, uncles, brothers or a significant male in the children's life flocked into school in high numbers to spend the day working with their children. Many asked, 'When can we come again?' There were numerous words of praise for the headteacher and her team in the questionnaires received by inspectors. One parent wrote, 'Grafton is a fantastic school! The head is tireless in her efforts to make the school an exciting but friendly place for children and their families...we don't just like this school, we love it!' This echoes the sentiments of the vast majority. Community cohesion is especially strong. The school community reaches out to the local community through forging outstanding links not only with parents but also with local businesses. Visitors to the school praise the links that have been made.

Leadership and management are exemplary at all levels, including every single teacher who is a leader in their own classroom. Newly qualified teachers soon acquire high levels of expertise because all around them they have excellent role models. Monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders are excellent. The school knows exactly what it should do to improve further and has excellent plans in place to ensure its continual development. The headteacher and her team make pupils' achievement their first concern. Middle leaders look after their areas of responsibility extremely well and subject development plans are of high quality and show a reflective approach leading to improvement. Governance is very strong. Governors know what the performance data show about their school and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas of relative weakness. They are fully involved in the life of the school and enjoy their responsibilities greatly. One said, 'The school is an exciting place to visit and we actually look forward to governors' meetings.'

Standards are above average and achievement is outstanding. Since the time of the last inspection, standards have risen steadily and the school appears consistently in the top 1% of schools in the country for the progress their pupils make in English, mathematics and science. This is a reflection of the superb teaching pupils receive and a highly creative curriculum which plays to their strengths. Teaching is excellent because of a genuine concern that every child really does matter. Pupils' thinking skills are developed and nurtured in every lesson, ensuring that pupils, 'fly away in their learning'. Mathematics teaching is particularly strong because teachers focus on what they want pupils to learn rather than on how they are going to teach. In an excellent Year 6 lesson, pupils were observed solving a golfing problem. Pupils challenged each other as to how they could link strength and weight to compute the distance the golf ball would travel when struck. The quality of group discussion and interaction was high and facilitated extremely well by the teacher who asked pupils questions in order to prompt their thinking and strategy. In addition, there is a successful focus on speaking and listening across all subjects. This was used particularly well in a philosophy lesson where pupils were encouraged to develop a reasoned argument about making correct choices. The teaching of art and drama is exceptional.

Pupils were captivated in a Year 3 lesson where they presented their 'freeze frames' to the rest of the class who offered a mature critique of each other's work.

The school's cross-curricular approach to learning ensures pupils receive a rich education. Art, drama and history combine well to make learning more meaningful and fun. A recent visit to an art gallery acted as a starting point for Year 6 pupils who demonstrated their emotions and feelings about a particular painting through drama. Boys were particularly enthusiastic and their 'tableaux' were of high quality. Art work is exceptional as demonstrated by the superb displays around the school. 'The Fighting Temeraire' by Turner, has prompted the building of a ship in the school hall which is quite breathtaking. Pupils' talent has been fostered well and a DVD of the 'Fighting Temeraire' based on cross-curricular work done by the pupils will be entered in a competition. Previously, pupils had winning postcards on sale in the National Gallery. Provision for music is excellent. Specialist teachers add to the diversity of the curriculum in the school. During the inspection whole classes were observed enthusiastically learning stringed instruments. Visits and visitors play an excellent role in developing inquiring minds. Artists and writers in residence demonstrate the school's eagerness to take an 'open minded' approach to learning. A wealth of extra-curricular clubs, which have a high uptake, also enrich pupils' experiences at the school. There are not only clubs for pupils, but for their parents too; for example, family literacy, learning English as a second language and parenting skills. Parents praise these highly.

The care, guidance and support pupils receive are first rate. This is because the assessment of pupils' needs is paramount. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language and others who have specific, moderate, behavioural or speech and language difficulties are identified early. This identification often takes place before pupils even start school, in nursery or under-fives centres, and individual education plans are formulated to address particular needs. Well-trained teaching assistants target these needs in the classroom. Bilingual pupils are supported extremely well. The tracking of pupils' progress is excellent and 'shows where we can make a difference'. For example, weaknesses in boys' writing have been tackled through resident writers holding inspirational sessions for boys where personalised writing diaries promote a love of writing. Target setting and pupil reviews have a real impact on raising attainment. Pupils know their targets and are also clear about what they must do to achieve them. This is because teachers' marking and the feedback they give ensures that pupils know how to make the jump to the next level of attainment.

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is exemplary. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They know that certain foods should be eaten in moderation. As one pupil clearly explained, 'It's OK to eat chips if they are baked, not fried. Big fat chips are healthier than small thin ones.' 'Healthy Day' and sports activities contribute well to pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and if there is any falling out, they are confident that it will be sorted out quickly. They take on responsibilities willingly such as being a playground friend or a member of the school council, and raise money for charities. Pupils are prepared very well for their future role in society and their above average basic skills equip them well for secondary school. The school is always striving to develop and move forward and sees attendance as an area of focus and improvement. Although they have come a long way since the previous inspection they realise that there is still work to be done to ensure that all pupils attend school as often as they can. The school is capitalising on its links with parents to remedy this.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an excellent start in EYFS. They start school with skills and capabilities that are significantly below those expected for their ages. Outstanding teaching ensures that the children make very good progress so that they reach standards that are in line with national levels by the end of the Reception Year. In some areas of learning, including children's attitudes, numeracy, physical and creative development, children reach above average standards. It is only in reading and writing where standards are below those seen nationally. The school is aware of this and constantly seeks new ways to enhance the ways in which reading and writing are taught to young children. Parents voice very strong praise for the arrangements for the care and welfare of their children in EYFS. As one explained, 'The staff are very friendly and this really helped my son when he first started.' Parents also comment on how the school encourages children from different backgrounds to mix and get on so well together. As one described it, 'The school does a brilliant job of bringing children of all backgrounds together in a warm environment.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with the whole school community even more closely in order to improve attendance.

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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 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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2
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 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

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?	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

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

26 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grafton Primary School, London, N7 6AR

How impressed we were when we visited your outstanding school recently. What a fantastic education you all receive. We were happy to see so many smiling faces and to be told how much you enjoy attending school. We thought you were extremely well behaved and you should be proud! Well done! Your headteacher and her team of teachers have done a smashing job. We saw lots of very interesting lessons and saw how well you learn. We loved your art work, especially the fish in the fish tank, what lovely long eyelashes they had. Your ship in the hall is awesome! What a lot of work has gone into it. The backdrop of the city of London is particularly beautiful. We wish you luck in your competition. Perhaps you will let us know how you get on?

Mathematics lessons are really excellent in your school. I enjoyed watching you busily work on your problem about golfing in Year 6. I also enjoyed all the drama work I saw in a variety of lessons; you were very grown up when you talked about each other's work. Your teachers are outstanding people and have your best interests at heart. They want you to learn as much as possible so that you can achieve well. You do well in national tests, this is highly commendable.

Even in a super school like yours there are always things to be done and new things to try. Your headteacher has worked hard to ensure that you all attend school as often as you can, but some of you still take time off when you don't really need to. We have asked that she continues to improve your attendance by working in partnership with your parents and carers. You can play your part too by always attending school whenever you can.

Thank you for making our day in your school such a memorable one and I wish you all the very best in your school for the future.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector