

Clerkenwell Parochial CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100436
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	323278
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	170
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 David Sulkin
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Dwulit (Executive) Mr Matthew O'Brien (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Amwell Street London EC1R 1UN
Telephone number	020 7837 1824

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
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Fax number

020 7713 6586

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Almost half of the pupils at this smaller than average school are of White British heritage. The remainder are from a wide range of backgrounds, the largest group being those of Black or Black British heritage. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is above average, with Bengali, Tigrinya and Yoruba among the most common languages spoken. The proportion identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (mainly moderate learning difficulties) is greater than usually found and more pupils than usual are eligible for free school meals. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) join at the beginning of the Reception year. There has been a high turnover of staff in recent years, including a number of changes of headteacher. Since September 2007 the school has been federated with another local school, the headteacher of which acts as executive headteacher of both schools, spending part of the week in each school. In addition, there is a full-time head of school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The federation with another local school has had a positive impact on its development and on the quality of education it provides. Under the excellent guidance of the executive headteacher, after a period of turbulence, the staff are now more settled and there is a common sense of purpose and a commitment to securing further improvement. Standards are rising and are now at average levels. Increasingly good teaching means that pupils make good progress across the school and achieve well from their starting points. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being, enjoy school and work hard. This is appreciated by most parents, who are supportive of the school and are pleased with its improvement. Typical among the comments received, one parent noted that the school is 'warm and welcoming and the teachers seem to care very much for the children. It is also very well led... A great, happy school!'

Recognising that standards were too low and many pupils were in danger of underachieving, the executive headteacher and head of school, well supported by governors, took swift and decisive action. The main focus of their work was to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A combination of robust monitoring and the careful tracking of pupils' progress has given senior staff a very accurate picture of what is working well and what needs to improve. Areas for improvement are identified and teachers work tirelessly to tackle them. Their success means that pupils benefit from consistently good, and occasionally outstanding, teaching and this is making a substantial contribution to the rising standards. Intensive support from the local authority and the diocesan board has also helped to raise standards. One of the most improved aspects of teaching and learning is the way staff have been helped to focus precisely on how well pupils are progressing and to target support where it is most needed. The head of school ensures that the information gathered from this tracking is used extremely effectively to identify whole school areas for improvement and to set challenging targets.

The school's improvement is evident in its performance in national assessments in recent years. The results for pupils in Year 6 fell significantly in 2006 and were exceptionally low and many pupils underachieved. The impact of better teaching and learning was seen in the improved results for 2007, although standards remained below average. This improvement continued in 2008. Although it is not yet possible to make a firm comparison with other schools nationally, the proportions reaching the expected Level 4 or higher Level 5 was in line with that found in most schools in previous years. The school's extensive and robust records show that these pupils achieved well from their starting points. Pupils currently in Year 6 are well on track to raise standards still further and this picture of good progress is repeated in other year groups.

Staff work well as a team and adopt a consistent approach to many aspects of their work, including planning and assessment. They share the responsibility for leading and monitoring subjects and make an important contribution to the school's improvement. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and accurately, although there are inconsistencies in the way that feedback is given to pupils. While there are some good examples of comments that give pupils precise information about how well they have achieved the objective for the lesson and what they need to do to improve, there are some missed opportunities. Similarly, the pupils' involvement in responding to teachers' comments, and in evaluating their own learning, varies from class to class. Nevertheless, pupils respond well to the targets they are set for English, mathematics and science and have a secure understanding of how to achieve them.

Pupils play their part in the school's improving provision. They respond well to the school's calm, productive atmosphere, enjoy positive relationships with adults and pupils, and appreciate the clear guidelines and expectations they are set by staff. They contribute well to the school's smooth running by carrying out important jobs and this promotes their personal development well. Through their school council, for example, they enjoy helping to identify areas for improvement, although there is scope to extend opportunities for them to show initiative through, for example, chairing and organising their meetings. The broad and balanced curriculum adds to pupils' enjoyment, promotes their personal development well and ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives.

Senior leaders, staff and governors have achieved considerable improvement in a relatively short space of time and have created an ethos in which all pupils, whatever their background or ability, are able to fulfil their potential. They are united in the pursuit of further improvement and their track record shows they are exceptionally well placed to do so.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many children join the Reception class with skills that are well below those typical of their age. Good teaching and the careful monitoring of children's welfare ensure that they learn and develop at a good pace and achieve well, although most do not reach the goals expected at the end of Reception. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They enjoy their time in Reception, behave well and become increasingly independent and confident. A careful check is kept on their learning and there is a good balance between the activities led by adults and opportunities for children to choose for themselves. Detailed records are kept and these build up into helpful portfolios showing children's progress over time. Assessment systems are rightly under review because staff feel that their judgements sometimes underestimate what children can do. Children attend a wide range of settings before joining Reception and assessments start soon after the children arrive, so that staff can quickly ensure that work closely matches their individual needs. This is made more difficult because records of their attainment prior to joining the school are not always available. The school has recognised this and is rightly taking steps to improve links with its feeder settings to enhance the quality of information available as children join the school. The Reception class is well led and managed. Resources are plentiful and are well organised to promote children's independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure a more consistent approach to marking pupils' work.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to show initiative.
- Improve links with the settings attended by children before they join Reception.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From well below-average starting points, pupils achieve well to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards at Year 2 are broadly average. Successful work to improve pupils' writing resulted in above-average standards in the national assessments for pupils in Year 2 in 2008. This success has contributed to the steadily improving results in recent years. Very challenging targets were set for Year 6 pupils in 2008, and a measure of the school's success is that the targets were exceeded. The school tracks pupils' progress very carefully and uses this information very well to ensure that pupils of all backgrounds and ability achieve well.

Pupils learning English as an additional language are supported well, so they soon gain confidence and achieve as well as their classmates. There is some variation in the national test results of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with moderate learning difficulties, from year to year. However, the school's robust records show that these pupils make good progress, and some exceed their challenging targets by considerable amounts.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They enjoy coming to school and the great majority attend well, although the sporadic attendance of a few pupils lowers the overall rate. Nevertheless, the school does much to promote good attendance and is working successfully to reduce the level of absence. Senior staff identified the need to improve pupils' behaviour and their success means that behaviour in class and around the school is consistently good. This makes a considerable contribution to the smooth running of lessons and to pupils' good progress. The school's successful pursuit of the national Activemark award is a reflection of the strong emphasis given to pupils' physical and social development. A good range of sporting activities is offered outside of lessons, and take-up is high. Pupils report that they feel safe in school, and this adds to their enjoyment. There are many carefully structured opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school community, for example, by acting as monitors ensuring safety along the school's narrow corridors and by supporting younger pupils. The school council is active and influential and pupils would welcome the opportunity to show more initiative by having more say in how the council is run. Among their opportunities beyond the school, pupils take part in local and church events and raise funds for charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff work well together as a team, sharing expertise and supporting each other with their planning. The well-qualified teaching assistants play a very important role, particularly in providing good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language. Lessons are well organised, with clear objectives and an indication of how the work will be modified for more able pupils and those who have difficulty learning. Staff ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn, although their written feedback is not always precise enough about how well pupils have achieved those objectives and how they can improve. Relationships are very positive and, as a result, lessons run smoothly and teachers can concentrate on helping pupils to learn. Teachers make good use of technology to enhance pupils' understanding. In an outstanding lesson in Year 6, for example, the teacher used a 'digital visualiser' (which projects a live image onto the interactive whiteboard) to show pupils how they should measure the weight of an object accurately. Staff are vigilant about pupils' differing needs and this is an important factor in ensuring that all pupils achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum includes good provision for literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Much of the planning is closely based on

national guidelines and teachers use these plans well to ensure that pupils' differing needs are met. There are good links between subjects so that, for example, pupils have good opportunities to use and improve their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. The school rightly plans to explore ways of extending their planning beyond the national guidelines to make the curriculum even more exciting. Extra planning for pupils new to learning English ensures that they are fully included and able to learn. A strong emphasis on promoting pupils' personal and social development helps these pupils to make similarly good progress to their classmates. There is a good range of activities outside lessons and pupils' enjoyment is enhanced by trips to places of interest and visiting specialists. For example, the visit of a local artist led to some high-quality artwork, much of which is displayed around the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils and this is appreciated by many parents who comment on the 'lovely atmosphere'. Pupils, including the youngest children in Reception, settle quickly and make good progress. There are good procedures to keep pupils safe and secure and many pupils report that they can approach an adult if they have concerns. Pupils of all abilities are supported well. Those who find learning difficult get the extra help they need and they benefit from good teamwork between teachers and support staff. Similarly, the needs of pupils identified with particular gifts or talents are supported well. Most pupils have a good understanding of the targets they are set and there are good opportunities for them to set targets for themselves. As a result, they develop a secure understanding of what they need to do to improve, although there is scope for staff to ensure that their marking contributes more precisely to this process.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership has ensured that the school has successfully tackled areas of weakness. Strong teamwork - a combination of excellent leadership from the executive headteacher and good support from governors, other senior leaders and staff - has been instrumental in the school's success. The executive headteacher and head of school have ensured that there is a very clear and accurate picture of the school's effectiveness and how it needs to improve. They have created robust systems so that all staff can contribute to the school's improvement, either in their own classrooms or by leading the development of subjects across the school. Staff know what is expected of them. The role of subject leaders has improved since the last inspection because staff are given the time and skills to monitor their subjects carefully. Core subject leaders, in particular, are fully involved in planning and improving whole-school issues beyond their own subjects, and there is scope to extend the influence of other subject leaders in this way. Senior staff use their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses exceptionally well, based on the outcomes of their monitoring and the tracking of pupils' progress, to set very challenging targets.

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

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	2
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

27 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Clerkenwell Parochial CofE Primary School, London, EC1R 1UN

I am writing to thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time in school and you were very friendly and welcoming. A special mention goes to those of you who met with us to give us your views.

Many of your parents wrote to tell us how pleased they are that the school has improved. We agree with them. Yours is a good school because all the adults work hard to make sure that you are safe and able to learn well. You play your part by behaving well, getting on with each other and being ready to learn. We could see how hard you work. Well done, and please keep it up because it is so important. Because your teachers do a good job and you listen and work hard, you are making good progress and your work is getting better all the time.

Even though your school is good, the staff and governors want it to be even better. We know you will want to help them. There are three things we have asked them to do.

- You know your targets well and this gives you a good idea of how you are doing. Your teachers work hard to mark your books. In their comments, we want them to give you clearer information about how you can improve. You can help by making sure that you read their comments and try hard to do what they suggest.
- The school council does a good job. We would like you to have more opportunities to make decisions for yourselves, for example by running the meetings yourselves. Please make sure that you support your council and help them come up with lots of ideas.
- Before children join Reception, they go to lots of different groups and nurseries. The staff would like to get more information about what children can do before they start your school, so they can give them the right kind of help. They have started to do this and we agree it is important that they do.

We are sure you will want to help your school get even better and we wish you good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Keith Williams

Lead Inspector