

Lark Hall Primary School (Including Lark Hall Centre for Pupils with Autism)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100576
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	323300
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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)	425
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	58
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ebenezer Akinsanmi
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Tennant (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Smedley Street London SW4 6PH
Telephone number	020 7622 3820
Fax number	020 7627 8854

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Pupils come from wide-ranging ethnic heritages. The largest groups are from other White, Black African or Black Caribbean backgrounds. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is much higher than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. These learning needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social, speech, language and communication and moderate learning difficulties. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average and includes 28 pupils in the Centre for Pupils with Autism. There are 102 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage including 57 who attend the Nursery on a part-time basis. The rest are organised into two Reception classes.

In February 2009, the school was federated with a local primary school whose headteacher is the executive headteacher of Lark Hall. In addition, Lark Hall has two Heads of School and a Head of the Centre for Pupils with Autism.

The school has a Children's Centre and there is an after school club on the premises which is managed by a private provider.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to raising pupils' achievement and standards across the school, improving the consistency of teaching and learning and setting challenging targets.

In the years since the last inspection, the performance of the school declined because of considerable disruption in its leadership and management. Although the overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate, recent changes to the leadership and management are beginning to bring about improvements. Given the starting points six months ago, this demonstrates that its capacity to improve is satisfactory. The prompt action taken by the highly effective and skilled executive headteacher has resulted in positive steps being taken to begin to secure the necessary improvement. Together with the two Heads of School she has formed a strong team that has a clear view of strengths and areas where the school is underperforming. Senior leaders are relentless and determined to drive forward school improvement. Actions taken so far have helped to improve significant areas of pupils' personal development and well-being. Although attendance remains below average, it has improved considerably. Pupils' attitudes to learning are better and behaviour is now satisfactory.

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Children's skills at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are below expectations but standards are exceptionally low by the end of Years 2 and 6. The achievement of some pupils, given their starting points, which are well below expectations when they join the school, is satisfactory. However, there are too many pupils who are not making progress at a fast enough rate to enable them to catch up with past slow progress in their learning. The legacy of underachievement has not been eradicated, but many pupils are starting to make better progress. This is evident in Key Stage 1 where more consistent and effective teaching has resulted in improved standards in the last few months in reading, writing and mathematics.

The swift and effective work of senior leaders and their skilled intervention and support demonstrate that, despite the low standards, teaching and learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. However, it is too early to see the impact of the school's actions on standards across Key Stage 2. Also, the quality of teaching is more variable between Years 3 and 6 as work is not always well matched to pupils' needs or sufficiently challenging. Because of the unsettled circumstances of the school, improvement since the last inspection had been unsatisfactory. Leaders recognise that teaching and learning need to be good and targets more challenging if they are to raise standards more rapidly across the school. Standards of attainment for pupils in the Centre for Pupils with Autism are well below average, but as a result of consistently good teaching and provision they make good progress.

The quality of the school's care is satisfactory and aspects of pastoral support are good. The work that has been done to gain an Activemark Award means that pupils know to keep fit and live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils feel safe at school. They respond positively to the behaviour policy and this is helping them to be more responsible for their actions. Teachers ensure that learning, including that of pupils who find it difficult to moderate their own behaviour, is interrupted as little as possible. Good links with a range of other schools and agencies make a

strong contribution to pupils' well-being and to their satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assessment information is not used well enough to ensure that pupils have clear targets for learning. Additionally, pupils do not have enough guidance about how they could do better.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Personal, social and emotional development is given a high priority and as a result, children do well in this area. Children are happy, secure and have positive relationships with adults and other children. They play amicably together sharing equipment and space. There are clear and consistent expectations of behaviour from all staff and children respond well, striving to climb to the top of the behaviour 'beanstalk.' The provision for their welfare is good with effective induction procedures that make children's start to school a smooth and secure process.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Improvements in planning ensure that all areas of learning are covered. Children experience a balance of activities led by adults and those where they can make their own choices. However, activities often lack excitement, which would engage and motivate children, enliven their learning and encourage their independence. Adults sometimes do things that children could do for themselves. The school has plans to enhance the outside learning area, as opportunities are missed to make activities meaningful and exciting.

Children start at school with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their ages and their achievement is satisfactory. However on entering Year 1, children's attainment remains below expectations in all areas, except for their personal, social and emotional development where they reach the expected goals. Communication, language and literacy skills remain particularly low because there are a considerable number of children who are at the very early stages of learning English and there is a lack of consistency in teaching sounds and letters. Creative development is also particularly low because too much creative work is overly directed by adults, as seen when children painted a picture of a pig. In a writing session, children were required to write the same sentences instead of writing down their own ideas. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The individual needs of children are known and staff record their observations; however, assessment information is not always used effectively enough in planning the next steps of children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science by accelerating pupils' progress.
- Ensure the school uses its assessment procedures to ensure that pupils have challenging targets and know how to improve.
- Ensure there is consistency in the quality of teaching and learning by matching work more closely to pupils' needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

From their starting points, which are well below expectations, progress is inadequate overall and standards are exceptionally low by the time pupils leave the school. Since January some pupils are beginning to make satisfactory and sometimes better progress where teaching is

more effective, but too many pupils are not making progress at a fast enough rate to catch up in their learning. Improvements in teaching are helping to halt the decline in achievement seen in recent years. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 1 where standards, although exceptionally low, improved from 2008, particularly in reading and writing, because of a programme of training to improve teachers' skills. Standards at Key Stage 2 declined from 2008. Despite some better progress being made, notably in Year 3, it is still too uneven across year groups. There is no difference in the rate of progress made by pupils from different ethnic groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils behave sensibly in lessons and around the school, although those with extremely challenging behaviour can sometimes be disruptive. Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with firmly. As a result, the ethos and attitudes in most classes is positive. Attendance is below average but has improved considerably in recent months. Pupils willingly accept extra responsibilities and take their roles seriously, such as membership of the school council. The school is working hard to prepare pupils for adult life through its effective personal, social, health and citizenship programme. However, pupils' lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills mean that many are inadequately prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils are aware of issues that affect the local and wider community and particularly enjoy their work on recycling and cultivating a garden area to grow plants, fruit and vegetables, which helps to develop their understanding of healthy eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent and ranges from good to inadequate. Leaders are working to make the quality better. Additional support is provided for teachers whose lessons have a number of weaknesses and this is leading to an increased proportion of lessons that are good. Teaching assistants generally work well alongside class teachers, providing effective support for the groups they are working with and encouraging pupils to concentrate on what they are doing. Lesson-planning clearly shows what pupils are expected to learn. In better lessons this is shared well with pupils through questioning and discussion and provides a good tool for pupils to consider how well they are doing. Teachers spur pupils on with good use of praise and encouragement. However, in some classes teachers do not use assessment information well enough to match work to pupils' different abilities and interests. Their expectations of pupils do not provide sufficient challenge, especially for the more-able. The work for those of lower ability does not always take enough account of the levels at which they should be working or the style of learning appropriate to them. Consequently pupils start to lose interest and concentration and their learning is reduced. Teaching is good in the Centre where activities are very well matched to the specific targets set for pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum sufficiently matches the learning needs of pupils. The school has correctly focused on improving the provision for literacy and numeracy, which is now satisfactory. The

provision for pupils' personal, social and health education has also improved, resulting in better behaviour and attitudes to learning. Plans are in hand to develop a more exciting and creative curriculum to add further interest and purpose to pupils' learning. The satisfactory range of visitors contributes to curriculum enrichment. Older pupils especially appreciate the links with a local football club that provides them with professional coaching. A range of after-school clubs, including different sports, gardening, science, Portuguese and music, are enjoyed by pupils and contribute well to their personal and social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff are committed to pupils' well-being and ensure they remain safe. Child protection and other safeguarding requirements are robust and secure. Pastoral care is especially well developed and the school has begun to develop stronger links with parents. Vulnerable pupils, including those with social and behavioural needs, are particularly well supported. Recent developments, such as involving parents in homework and promoting better attendance, are helping pupils to be more motivated and show positive attitudes to school. Newly established systems are developing to track progress and identify underachievement. Academic guidance is variable in quality. Pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own progress. They do not always know their targets or how to extend their learning. There are some examples of marking which give pupils useful information to enable them to know how well they are doing and how they can improve, but this is inconsistent across the school.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Out-of-classroom support is well organised, but is not yet fully evaluated for its impact on pupils' progress. A particular strength is the outstanding care for pupils in the Centre. Great skill is taken in assessing and responding to pupils' specific needs. Here, excellent links with their parents and carers, and with different outside agencies and organisations, ensures that pupils and their families are very well supported. Pupils in the main school with similar but less pronounced needs also benefit from the expertise of staff and facilities in the Centre. Where appropriate, pupils in the Centre integrate into the main school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The work of the senior leadership team is bringing about important changes to a school that has gone through a period of great turbulence in recent years. Consultation with pupils, staff and parents has helped to identify areas to improve. The school is still going through a period of change as six new staff start at the school in September 2009. New responsibilities and structures will be implemented and there is a considerable reorganisation of accommodation planned. Some other middle managers are beginning to make notable contributions to school improvement, for example leadership in Key Stage 1. Nonetheless, some subject leaders are still at an early stage of developing their leadership skills. There is an increased emphasis on professional development and staff commented that, as a result, they feel valued and inspired. A rigorous monitoring programme informs the senior team about the school's strengths and weaknesses, but targets are not challenging enough to lift the school at a more rapid rate. The procedures to ensure the inclusion of pupils from a range of backgrounds are well managed. As a result, those with complex needs, emotional or physical difficulties, and those learning

English and new arrivals are fully involved in school life. In the Centre, there has been stability in staffing and leadership and management are good.

Community cohesion is satisfactory. Leaders have worked hard with parents and actively sought their views in a comprehensive survey. The vast majority of parents are positive about the school despite some concerns over behaviour. The school works effectively with its local community, but wider global and international links have yet to be developed. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are active in the life of the school and support it well, but there is insufficient focus on standards and achievement and action to hold the school to account for its performance.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
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?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

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?	3

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	4
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	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lark Hall Primary School (Including Lark Hall Centre for Pupils with Autism), London, SW4 6PH

I am writing to thank you for making my colleagues and me so welcome when we visited your school and to let you know what we found out about your school. Thank you for talking to us about your work and telling us what you think about your school.

Here are the main points.

- Lark Hall is a friendly, caring place and everyone looks after you well and gets help for you if you have a problem.
- You are trying hard to behave well and get on with each other. Your behaviour has improved - well done for this! Please try hard to keep this up and make it even better, as it means you can learn more effectively in your lessons.
- Your attendance has improved. Well done for this too, and keep it up so that you do not miss out on important learning.
- The children in the Centre make good progress.
- Not enough of your lessons help you to make fast progress.

However, as yet the school is not doing as well as it should. We have given the school what is called a 'Notice to Improve'. This means that the school will receive a visit from an inspector to check up on how well the school is doing. Then, in about a year, the school will have another inspection. All of the adults are working hard to improve the school. We have asked the headteacher and other school leaders to do three important things to make it better.

- Improve your standards in English, mathematics and science by helping you make faster progress to catch up in your learning.
- Check your progress carefully and make sure that you know your targets and how to improve.
- Make sure all lessons are taught well and that the work is just right for each of you.

Thank you again for all your help and for being so friendly and interesting to talk to. My very best wishes to you all for your future.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Coussins

Lead Inspector