

Richard Atkins Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100578
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	323302
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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)	375
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	26
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel East
Headteacher	Ms Julie Roberts
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	New Park Road Brixton Hill London SW2 4JP
Telephone number	020 8674 5601
Fax number	020 8674 0156

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Richard Atkins Primary is a larger than average, two-form entry primary school. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a part-time Nursery class and two Reception classes. Wholesale demolition of houses and delayed rebuilding have led to a significant decline in the number of pupils on roll as established families were moved out of the area. As a result, one quarter of the pupils joined or left at unusual times in 2008/09, which is very much higher than in most schools. There is a very diverse mix of ethnic groups in the school. The great majority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups and over half are from White and Black Caribbean or African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is well above average. Almost half of the pupils take free school meals but the school has evidence that more pupils are entitled to do so. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. A breakfast club and an after-school care club are provided on site, which are managed by the governing body. The school has gained the Healthy School Award, the Primary Quality Mark, the Financial Standards Award and the Leading Parent Partnership Award.

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. It has some outstanding features and meets the needs of its learners well. It provides a haven of stability and security for all its pupils and is a centre for the community. The leadership and management of the school are good and the headteacher's leadership is outstanding. The staff want the best for each child and, through working very closely with families, strive to achieve this goal. Pupils clearly enjoy learning, behave well and speak with pride about the school. More than one pupil said, 'School is fun!' Pupils are encouraged to take pride in themselves and all they do and, consequently, become confident learners. The curriculum ensures that pupils have a good variety of exciting activities and experiences through visits, residential stays and visitors to the school. These activities give pupils a lot to talk, think and write about. This is especially important, as the majority of pupils enter the school with low communication skills and a limited knowledge and understanding of the wider world.

Children join the school with skills that are very much lower than those expected for their age. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The constant flux of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 impacts adversely on the school's overall results. However, those pupils who were in Year 1 in the school have made good progress as they have moved up through the year groups. In English, mathematics and science, standards are well below average at the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6, particularly in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels. Although the main reason for this is the very high proportion of pupils who are new to the school, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as a second language, another contributing factor is that more able pupils are not always provided with sufficiently challenging work. The school is aware of this and is working hard to raise standards. Given the very low starting points of the pupils, at whatever stage they join the school, overall achievement is good.

The school has worked hard to improve attendance and, as a result, levels of attendance are now average. The school is well supported by a knowledgeable and active governing body. The new arrangements for staff responsibilities have effectively energised and empowered senior management, who work together very well as a team and are keen to improve standards in their areas of responsibility. Recent initiatives to improve pupils' reading skills are already beginning to show signs of significant improvement. Arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are good and, as a result, teaching is good across the school. Provision for care, guidance and support is outstanding and the school works exceptionally well in partnership with others. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are becoming more and more involved each year. One parent wrote, 'The headteacher has brought Richard Atkins to an exciting new level', and another parent expressed a view that is typical, 'I'm very happy with the level of teaching my son has received and feel he has made great progress.' The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through its excellent links with its own local community. It has a good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children join the Nursery, their skills and knowledge are very much lower than is usually expected for their age. Because English is an additional language for the great majority of children, overall communication and language skills are very low and children often lack the

social and personal skills that are usually expected for their age. Children generally lack self-confidence and need considerable help to ensure that they learn to be independent. As children move through the Nursery and Reception classes, however, they make good progress because teaching and learning are good overall. However, overall standards remain well below what is expected for their age when pupils enter Year 1, particularly in language and numeracy skills.

There is a good focus on helping children with their speaking skills and ensuring that they develop an ability to work with others in a friendly and purposeful way. As a result, children behave well and are enthusiastic in all that they do. The partnership with parents and carers is strong and is further strengthened by home visits. The pastoral care and welfare arrangements are very effective and, as a consequence, children are safe, well cared for and aware of how to be healthy. Adults provide a wide range of interesting learning activities, both inside and outside the classrooms. However, due to the restrictions of the Victorian building, access to the outdoor secure area has to be shared between the Nursery class and the two Reception classes and, therefore, is limited to certain times each day. The school realises this is not an ideal situation. In order to develop children's independent learning skills more fully, it is actively investigating ways of improving children's access to a range of free-choice and adult-led activities outside as well as inside the classroom, which are clearly linked to the overall learning objectives for each session.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly for the more able pupils.
- Investigate ways of providing more opportunities for outdoor activities for the youngest children in order to develop their independent learning skills further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The movement of pupils into and out of the school is very high and a number of pupils join Key Stage 1 and 2 who have not received any formal education prior to arriving. More than half of the current Year 6 pupils did not start their formal education in the school's Early Years Foundation Stage classes. Assessment information provided by the school demonstrates clearly that pupils who start their education in the Nursery or Reception classes, and remain in the school until the end of Year 6, make good progress. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this good progress continues in Key Stages 1 and 2. However, due to the high rate of mobility, the very high levels of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and a very high proportion of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English, overall standards by the end of Year 6 are below expected levels, particularly in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels. Standards are improving year on year, however, due to improved and more stable teaching, and to secure and rigorous assessment and progress monitoring procedures, across the school. Through these systems, the school is able to show clearly that pupils for whom English is an additional language, and/or who join late, make good progress in their often brief time in school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and pupils who are just beginning to learn English make good, and frequently very good, progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They benefit from the many opportunities in the curriculum to reflect on moral and social issues, such as when a Year 6 class considered the character traits of Falstaff and Prince Hal in Shakespeare's Henry IV. They showed great sensitivity about feelings and emotions in different circumstances. Pupils form firm friendships and mix well with one another. They learn at first hand about different cultures and lifestyles from the wide range of backgrounds represented by the pupils in the school and by the staff. They develop good attitudes to learning and behave well. They enjoy their time in school and, as one girl said, 'We get lots of opportunities to do interesting things.' Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection, because of the rigorous systems introduced by the governing body, and are now satisfactory. Work undertaken to achieve the Healthy School Award ensures that pupils pay good attention to their health and safety and this, for example, influences the choices they make about food and exercise. Pupils make a good contribution to their community and develop a keen sense of responsibility for others, such as when acting as buddies or through involvement in school committee activities. They make good progress in the acquisition of competencies that will help them in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers create a good atmosphere for learning and manage their classes well. There is an energy and sense of purpose in most lessons created by the enthusiasm and secure subject knowledge of teachers. Teachers work with support staff very effectively, so that all pupils gain the confidence to contribute to lessons. Work is usually well matched to the abilities of pupils but the challenge is not always pitched high enough for those pupils who are capable of achieving higher levels. Lively sessions are enhanced by a wide range of techniques, such as 'talking partners' and 'hot seating', which provide many opportunities to think around problems and refine ideas. This greatly adds to pupils' imaginative thinking and the good progress they make in speaking and listening. Questions are used well to develop understanding but are not always used well enough to assess what pupils have learned in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is rich and diverse, which enables pupils to make good progress in all their skills. One of the considerable strengths of the curriculum is the wide range of focused intervention programmes designed to support pupils' learning. For example, the school has had considerable success in improving reading standards during the current school year by amending and enriching the literacy curriculum. The curriculum is well supported by a good range of interesting visits and visitors which enrich the curriculum and are very much appreciated by the pupils. It promotes healthy lifestyles, keeping safe and being considerate to others. A wide range of opportunities is provided for pupils to develop their skills and to perform in music, dance, drama and sporting activities. However, the curriculum is not always fully successful in addressing the needs of the more able pupils by providing suitably challenging work for them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care for the diverse range of pupils. The safety of all learners is one of its key priorities and all safeguarding procedures are securely in place. Links with outside agencies are very well established, from specialist support for those with learning difficulties, to social workers and counselling services working with children and families. Induction procedures for new pupils are very good and, as a result, pupils quickly settle into the school routines. Data on pupils' progress are collected regularly and the progress of individual pupils is regularly monitored and reviewed by senior leaders. This ensures that any pupil at risk of underachievement is identified at the earliest stage so that intervention strategies can be put into place to ensure that they make better progress. Guidance in lessons ensures that children are clear about the objectives for each lesson and about their own personal targets. Pupils receive feedback on how well they are doing and say they feel well informed. Teachers' marking is thorough and up to date and, in most instances, makes it clear to pupils what the next steps in learning are.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The main strengths of the school are the exceptional commitment, enthusiasm and leadership of the headteacher and the determination of all staff, led by the senior leadership team, to do their best for all pupils, regardless of their background, previous experience or abilities. The headteacher has brought the school successfully through a period of significant turbulence which eventually resulted in an almost complete change of teaching staff. As a result of these necessary but difficult changes, the quality of teaching and learning, the rate of attendance, pupils' attitudes and behaviour, and standards have all improved significantly under her leadership. The governors are hard-working and use their good understanding of the school effectively to hold it to account. The methods for evaluating the school's work, the effectiveness of decisions and the areas to be improved are rigorous. Consequently, the school knows itself well. The evaluation of lessons, conducted by the headteacher and senior leaders, with the support of the local authority advisers, gives a good view of the quality of teaching. The members of the senior management team are determined to improve standards in their areas and subjects. However, subject leaders are still at an early stage of developing their role. The school has very good links with parents, the quality of which has been recognised by its gaining the Leading Parent Partnership Award. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through its outstanding links with the local community, and good links with schools overseas, although it realises it could do more to develop links within the United Kingdom. The school has a good recent track record of improvements and the inspectors agree with the school that it has a good capacity 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?	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?	1
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?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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?	1

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

03 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Richard Atkins Primary School, London, SW2 4JP

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleagues and I very much enjoyed our visit.

Richard Atkins is a good school that provides outstanding care, support and guidance for you. Your headteacher and staff are leading the school well. They care for you very well and give you good support to enable you to learn and enjoy your lessons. They make sure that you understand how to look after yourselves and keep safe, and you do this well. You told us that you really like your school and there are lots of things to do and enjoy. We agree with you. Your behaviour is good. You work hard and try to succeed in all that you do.

We have asked your school to do a few things to make it even better:

- help more of you to achieve higher levels in English, mathematics and science by giving you more challenging work
- arrange more opportunities for the youngest children to work and play outside the classroom.

Yours faithfully

Clive Lewis

Lead Inspector