

Athelney Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100672
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	323324
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Frater HMI

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)	331
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	Ms Dorette Rodney
Headteacher	Mrs Irene Cleaver
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Athelney Street London SE6 3LD
Telephone number	020 8697 2945
Fax number	020 8695 6099

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Athelney Primary School is larger than most. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides for 80 children in the Nursery, a Reception class, and a mixed-age class for Reception and Year 1 pupils. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. About two thirds of the pupils, well above average, are from minority ethnic groups, predominantly Black Caribbean and African, and many more than usual are at an early stage of learning English. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, relating mainly to language and communication, and moderate and specific learning difficulties. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs is above average. More pupils than is usual join or leave the school at times other than at the start of Year 1. The school was removed from special measures in 2006. It has achieved the Activemark and Artsmark Silver awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Athelney Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education. Over the past three years, and with good support from the local authority, standards in English, mathematics and science show an improving trend. In the 2007 national assessments and tests, standards rose to broadly average. This represented good achievement from the pupils' attainment on entry, which was below average. In the 2008 national assessments in Year 2, standards were sustained in writing and mathematics, but declined in reading to well below average. In the national tests in Year 6, standards continued to rise in mathematics and were sustained in science, although not at the higher level, and they dipped in English significantly at the higher level. Observations of progress in lessons, and the school's data, indicate that standards for current pupils are now below average. Achievement is satisfactory overall, although uneven across the school, and more-able pupils are not yet making the progress that could be expected of them, particularly in English. Intervention programmes support pupils at an early stage of learning English, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling them to progress at the same rate as their peers.

While the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, it is not yet meeting the needs of all pupils, particularly the more able. Improvement in this issue since the last inspection has been slow. There are examples of good teaching, where learning activities are well matched to the range of pupils' needs so they make good progress. In these lessons, pupils enjoy practical investigation and problem solving, and the teachers' questions challenge them to extend their vocabulary and understanding. In many lessons, however, individual targets set for pupils, including the most- and least-able, are not used sufficiently to set varying levels of challenge. The curriculum, although satisfactory and improving, does not yet promote the progress of all groups of pupils consistently across the school, particularly in English.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, and pupils behave well. While the quality of care, guidance and support overall is satisfactory, the school takes good care of its pupils. As one parent commented, 'There is a real feeling of care, support and a sense of belonging.' The school sets challenging targets and monitors pupils' progress satisfactorily. However, not all teachers make enough use of the targets or their marking to guide pupils in improving their work. The school has worked hard to reduce the level of persistent absentees with some, albeit limited, success. However, attendance remains stubbornly low.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior leaders are rightly focusing on developing the skills of phase and curriculum leaders to sustain improvements. Together, senior and middle leaders identify relevant priorities for further development and take appropriate action to address them. However, limited evaluation of the impact of the actions on the outcomes for pupils has resulted in slow progress in improving teaching and learning. Governors support and challenge the school to continue to move forward. To improve attendance, they identified the need to engage parents more in the work of the school. Given the overall rising trend in achievement and standards, leadership and management at all levels provide satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery and Reception classes is below age-related expectations, and well below in communication and language skills. With good support from London Challenge, standards have risen over the past two years, and met national expectations in the 2008 Foundation Stage Profile. This represents good achievement given the children's starting points. Key to this success was an improvement in planning for individual children, informed by more focused use of assessment. The curriculum provides a good balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities, although, as the school has identified, use of the outdoor environment is in need of further development. Children's welfare is promoted appropriately, resulting in satisfactory personal development and well-being. However, the use of support staff, as key people to support the learning and development of allocated groups of children is inconsistent and is an area needing further development. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English overall and at the higher levels in mathematics and science, by matching teaching to the range of pupils' learning needs, and ensuring that pupils make good progress throughout their time in school.
- Ensure that senior and middle leaders focus on the progress of all pupils, particularly the more able, in monitoring and evaluating lessons, pupils' work and curriculum planning.
- Improve attendance by increasing the range of strategies to engage parents in the work of the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils previously entered Year 1 with standards that were below age-related expectations. Across Years 1 and 2 they made satisfactory progress. In the 2008 national assessments in Year 2, their standards were broadly average in writing and mathematics. Although they achieved well below average standards in reading, which depressed the standards overall to well below average, there is a rising trend in reading standards over the past three years. Pupils enter Year 3 with below average standards. Across Years 3 to 6, their achievement is uneven but satisfactory overall, and standards are below average. Results for the 2008 national tests in Year 6 indicate that standards continued to rise in mathematics and were sustained in science, although not at the higher level. They declined substantially in English at the higher level. This dip in an otherwise rising trend in achievement is due to teaching across the school not always meeting the needs of all pupils, particularly in English, and this results in their inconsistent progress across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Assemblies, visits and extra-curricular activities promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils support

the school's core values such as respect, honesty and trustworthiness. Behaviour is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and enjoy positive relationships with each other and with their teachers. They make a good contribution to school life, for example as play leaders and peer mediators, and to charities and community events such as carol singing. They know about the importance of exercise and healthy eating, although this is not always evident from the contents of their packed lunch boxes. Pupils are developing skills satisfactorily in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology, but there are few opportunities for them to develop skills such as teamwork in planning and organising events to prepare them for their future education and employment. The poor attendance of a minority of pupils impedes their achievement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In typical lessons, relationships are positive and teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. There is a clear structure to lessons leading pupils to the learning objective. Appropriate use is made of interactive whiteboards to model expectations. There are good examples of teaching, where teachers use questioning to extend pupils' learning and language skills, although in some lessons teachers spend too long in question-and-answer sessions. In the most effective lessons, teachers ensure that questions and tasks are at an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the least and most able, but this is not consistent across the school, which leads to uneven progress by pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum, although it is short of the recommended minimum teaching time in Years 1 and 2. To support teachers in their planning for pupils' progress across transitions from one key stage to another, the school has introduced new groupings according to age. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this initiative. However, the curriculum does not yet consistently promote the progress of all groups of pupils across the school, particularly at the higher levels and in English. Opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand learning experiences enhance the curriculum, for example through visits to a wide range of places of interest including museums, art galleries, sites for environmental study, and a residential experience for older pupils. These visits, together with a range of visitors to the school, make a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development. Pupils enjoy a variety of out-of-school clubs and extra-curricular activities that extend their social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support. All statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding. Effective links with a wide range of external agencies and other schools support the health and welfare of children and their families. Good support for new arrivals enables them to settle quickly into the school. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in wheelchairs, enables them to integrate fully into the life of the school. Behaviour management is effective due to a consistent approach

by all staff. The school works hard to promote attendance, using a wide range of appropriate strategies with some, though limited, success. It sets challenging academic targets and tracks pupils' progress towards them. However, teachers are not using pupils' individual targets sufficiently to inform their lesson planning. Their marking does not always provide pupils with short-term targets to help them improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior leaders are effective in developing the roles of phase and curriculum leaders. Together, the senior and middle leaders provide clear direction for improvement. This has resulted in a rising trend in standards and achievement, although the rise has not been sustained in English. This is due to the slow rate of improvement in the quality of teaching and, more importantly, in pupils' learning. Self-evaluation identifies relevant priorities, and appropriate action is taken to address them, for example training staff in providing for able pupils. However, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of actions and policies are not sufficiently focused on the outcomes for pupils to inform further action. Challenging targets are set at whole-school level and senior and phase leaders track pupils' progress towards them. They identify underachieving pupils and provide effective intervention. This promotes equality of opportunity for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those at an early stage of learning English. The integration of pupils, including new arrivals is supported well by community links, for example with different faith groups. In promoting an appreciation of diversity and shared values, and establishing harmonious relationships, the school makes a positive contribution to community cohesion. The adequacy, suitability and use of all staff and resources provide satisfactory value for money.

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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	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?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
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	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
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	3

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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**

11 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Athelney Primary School, London, SE6 3LD

Thank you for making the other inspectors and me so welcome in your school and helping us to find out all about life at Athelney Primary. We enjoyed talking to you.

You develop into sensible, well-behaved young people who show respect for each other. You feel safe in school, and we agree with you that your teachers take good care of you. You know how to keep fit and you told me you eat healthy fruit and vegetables, but I did notice that some of you had chocolate bars in your lunch boxes! Some of you find it difficult to attend school regularly, and this holds back your progress.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. By the time you are ready to move on to secondary school, you have made satisfactory progress and are approaching average standards in mathematics and science. You make less progress in English, and not enough of you reach the higher levels in all your subjects. Your headteacher is working with all the adults who are in charge of the school to make sure you achieve even better in your work. I have asked them and your teachers to:

- raise your standards in English overall, and enable more of you to reach the higher levels in English, mathematics and science, by making sure your work is not too easy or too difficult and that you make good progress all through the school
- focus on your progress towards your challenging targets when they monitor and evaluate your lessons
- work even more with your parents to help you to attend school regularly.

You can help by telling your teachers if your work is too hard or too easy, and by attending school regularly. Keep doing your best and working with your teachers to make sure Athelney Primary School gets better and better.

Yours faithfully

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector