

## Snowsfields Primary School incorporating the Tim Jewell Unit for Children with Autism

### Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100811
<b>Local Authority</b>	Southwark
<b>Inspection number</b>	323350
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wendy Simmons

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	231
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Terry Parkin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Katherine Wooder
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Kirby Grove Bermondsey London SE1 3TD
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7525 9065
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7525 9066

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Snowsfields is an average sized school that educates pupils from a very wide range of backgrounds. Pupils from Black African heritages form the largest group and make up one third of the school. The next largest group come from White British backgrounds. The remainder of the school comprises pupils from many different ethnic groups. Notably, 40 pupils are either asylum seekers or refugees and this, together with rehousing needs, means that the number of pupils that join and leave the school throughout the school year is much higher than is usual. Almost half of all pupils speak English as an additional language and close to half receive free school meals. A much higher than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' difficulties mainly relate to moderate learning, language and communication, behaviour and emotional difficulties. In addition, 24 pupils attend the unit for children with autistic spectrum disorders and often these pupils have extremely complex needs.

A private provider runs two additional services on the same site as the school. These are the 'Snowsfields After School Club' and 'The Playshelter'.

## 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 standards, achievement, teaching, learning and the curriculum.

Snowsfields has been through a very difficult time in the last two years. There has been a high turnover of staff and many classes have been taught by newly qualified teachers. In September 2007, a new headteacher was appointed. She has been instrumental in beginning to turn the school around and is well supported by the deputy headteacher and other staff. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school. She is knowledgeable, calm, reflective and thorough. As a result of satisfactory leadership, the school is beginning to recover from its past difficulties. However, there is still more to do, as too many pupils still leave the school without suitable skills; this is especially so in English and mathematics. This means that pupils are not being given the best chances for success in their future lives.

Leaders are correct in their view that standards are not high enough. Standards are exceptionally low by the end of Year 6, especially in English and mathematics. Throughout the school, pupils are beginning to recover from past underachievement. The green shoots of improvement are at a very early stage of development and so pupils' achievement is still inadequate. Nevertheless, the leaders' work has had a positive impact and, as a result, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Standards are rising in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. This is due to better teaching and a clearer focus on the teaching of reading, writing and mathematical calculation. Leaders have also taken firm action to improve the provision in the unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, and it is now satisfactory. Teamwork is good and this, together with close links with local outstanding schools and the local authority, aids the improvement. Leaders have made important improvements in the systems used to assess and track pupils' progress. As a result, the support and guidance given to pupils is now satisfactory.

Although teaching and learning are inadequate overall, there is an increasing proportion of satisfactory and good teaching. As yet, there is not enough good teaching to help pupils to make the really fast progress that they need in order to catch up. The school has had to rely heavily on newly qualified staff and, although they are very committed, enthusiastic and keen to improve, they lack experience. Consequently, while teachers welcome support and are strengthening their skills, lessons are not always challenging enough. Pupils agree and said, 'We would like more fun and challenges.' Teachers have begun to improve the curriculum, but it is not moulded enough to pupils' needs and interests. In short, it is not lively enough to ensure that pupils have fun and develop a thirst for learning.

Parents have confidence that the school is developing. As one put it, 'It has improved but can still do better on academic performance.' They also note that, 'teachers are friendly' and, 'pupils are not left out or written off'.

Pupils' behaviour has improved. The headteacher noted that behaviour was inadequate in 2007 and this was confirmed by the local authority. Behaviour is now satisfactory. This contributes to this multi-cultural school being a friendly place to be. As one pupil said, 'We are all good friends at heart.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils mostly enjoy school, but their attendance, although improving, is lower than average. Overall,

pastoral care is a strength of the school and ensures that pupils feel happy and safe. They are beginning to adopt healthy lifestyles more confidently and they enjoy doing things for the school and wider community.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Staff know the children well and take good care of them. Leadership is satisfactory and is resulting in provision that is improving. The increasing links with parents and carers help children to settle quickly at school. Staff are friendly and kind, and this helps the children to form close links with them. As a result, children gain confidence to work independently and try new things. Teachers place a clear emphasis on helping children with their speaking skills, which is especially important as many need plenty of help with this. When children join the school, their skills and knowledge are at very low levels and this is especially so in their ability to communicate and socialise with others. Often, children are emotionally immature and this means that they need considerable help when they get upset or anxious.

Children make steady progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, because teaching and learning are satisfactory. In 2008, only half of the children reached the level expected by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This proportion is beginning to rise as teachers have developed clear ways of checking children's progress. This is resulting in children having better opportunities to learn basic skills than they did in the past; achievement is satisfactory. Staff are very enthusiastic and keen to develop their skills still further in their drive to do their best for the children. Staff plan a suitable range of activities but there is room for more fun and investigation. Children enjoy outside activities and this aids their physical and social skills well. Children choose activities for themselves confidently and take part in more formal group work with adults. There is a good emphasis on learning letters and sounds (phonics). Staff recognise, rightly, that the children are not encouraged to apply their phonic knowledge to their writing as well as they could be. For example, children enjoyed making snowmen and tasting Chinese cookery, but teachers missed the chance to help them to use writing to follow up their experiences.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement and standards, so that pupils are better prepared for their future lives, especially in English and mathematics.
- Improve teaching and learning, so that more lessons are good and contain meaningful challenges for pupils.
- Enliven the curriculum, so that it is more fun and relevant to the needs of the pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Standards have been very low for several years. By the end of Year 6 in 2008, fewer than half of the year group reached the level expected in English and mathematics and pupils did only very slightly better in science. Some had not made any progress for long periods of time and good teaching in Year 6 came too late for them to catch up. Although the results of national tests at the end of Year 6 are depressed by the high number of pupils with very complex needs, inadequate teaching has also contributed to this. However, improving support for teachers and an increasing proportion of satisfactory and occasionally good lessons mean that standards are beginning to rise, but they are not yet high enough. Standards for the current Year 6 are likely

to remain very low this year. In Years 3-5, standards are looking better, but there is not enough good teaching and learning to accelerate pupils' progress as effectively as possible.

There is still too much underachievement. Currently, a third of pupils are making up ground but many still need to catch up. Pupils sometimes do better in one class than in another. The achievement of boys and girls has often differed greatly, and the school is keen to close the gap so that boys do better. Work has begun on this, but there is still more to do. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds also perform differently and it is not unusual for pupils from White British backgrounds to make slower progress than they should. Pupils in the Unit for autistic pupils made exceptionally slow progress in the past. Improved assessment systems are helping them to begin to make better progress. However, there is still more to do to enable them to do as well as possible.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher identified that pupils' poor behaviour often prevented them from learning. As a result of better support and clear expectations, pupils' behaviour is now satisfactory and this is having a positive impact on their learning. Pupils' behaviour in the unit for children with autistic spectrum disorders is sometimes challenging, but is managed well. Pupils mostly enjoy school and say that they are made to feel welcome by the staff and other pupils. Pupils are growing in confidence and especially enjoy the increasing range of clubs and visits. They are keen on sports and art, which demonstrates why the school has gained the Artsmark Silver and Healthy School Awards. Pupils are working hard to eat healthily. The proportion of pupils who eat five fruits or vegetables a day is increasing and is regularly checked by staff. Pupils know how to be safe in the local environment. Pupils know about different religions and cultures and incidences of racism are few. The school is working hard to promote community cohesion satisfactorily. Attendance is improving steadily but is lower than average. Pupils take their 'eco role' seriously and they contribute to fund-raising events. Since appreciable numbers of pupils leave the school with low standards in English and mathematics, they are not well enough prepared for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

Teaching is improving and new staff have grown in their confidence and skills. For example, teachers are better at teaching reading. Most of the lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory and a few were good. Nonetheless, samples of pupils' work and assessments of their progress show that teaching is not yet good enough in some classes to help them to fully recover from their past slow progress. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not always high enough. Sometimes staff do not have secure knowledge of the subjects being taught. For example, in mathematics, teachers are not doing enough to ensure that all pupils fully understand hundreds, tens and units. Teaching is occasionally good. Here, teachers are more skilled at planning the learning activities to make them interesting and challenging. Lesson planning is often thorough, but some lessons are too dull to ensure that pupils are as attentive as possible and actively involved in their learning. The teaching seen in the unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder during the inspection was satisfactory and improvements in the curriculum are aiding this.

## Curriculum and other activities

### Grade: 4

The school offers pupils an improving curriculum, but there is still more to do to make it satisfactory. Strengths include the growing number of opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills and the way that pupils are encouraged to widen their knowledge about how to be healthy. Projects such as 'Living in a Diverse World' aid community cohesion well and help pupils to understand about different cultures and religions. Pupils enjoy art, sports and the extra clubs, which enrich daily lessons. They say that they would like more design and technology, dance, music and gymnastics; inspectors agree that these are relatively underdeveloped. Pupils are pleased that a cookery club is starting shortly.

The curriculum is beginning to be modified more for the needs of the pupils, as is evident in developments for pupils with learning difficulties, including those in the unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. However, there is still more to do. Leaders understand that opportunities are missed, throughout the school, to tailor activities so that they inspire pupils to be thrilled by learning. The curriculum is not always fully relevant to pupils' needs and interests and it is not always meaningful to pupils. Links between different subjects are underdeveloped.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Staff know the pupils well and work closely with them and their parents to ensure that they are happy at school. Pupils who are new to the school are well supported and this is very important, as the school has high numbers of pupils who join and leave the school. The support given to asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable pupils is effective, and reflects the strong pastoral care. The school has developed close links with other schools and agencies to ensure that pupils receive suitable support. There have been important modifications to the care given in the unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, which is helping pupils to feel more included in the life of the whole school.

New systems have been introduced to check on pupils' progress, knowledge and skills and all staff are accountable for gathering evidence and checking individuals' progress. This means that when pupils have not made suitable progress, they are targeted for additional support. Catch-up activities are fully in place and are beginning to help pupils to do better although, sometimes, the time these are held means that pupils are missing other good literacy or numeracy lessons. Sometimes marking is good, but overall the quality is inconsistent, and this means that pupils are not always sure about how to improve individual pieces. Pupils generally know their targets well in English, although this is not as secure in mathematics and science.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

When the headteacher joined, she sought help to evaluate the quality of the school's provision and, as a result, she knows what needs to be done. The school has been involved in an intensive support programme since then, which is helping things to develop. The improvements in Years 1 and 2 show that there is satisfactory capacity to continue to improve. By the end of Year 2, standards have been rising steadily and they finally lifted from being at an exceptionally low

level in reading, writing and mathematics in July 2008. This improvement is on track to be maintained in 2009.

Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress and the evaluations are helping the school to set a clear plan for the improvement of standards and achievement. Leaders recognise that their monitoring of lessons and follow-up is not always sharp enough to ensure that teachers know precisely how to lift their teaching to good. Leaders have set suitably challenging targets. Staff and governors are working hard to make the school a better place for the pupils. Nevertheless, the school is not yet effective enough and this means that it is not giving adequate value for money.

The school has been well supported by the local authority. Recent changes in the governing body are bringing new skills to the team. Governors ask challenging questions and have the skills needed to support the school in its next stage of development. Leaders are working well to ensure that they promote community cohesion satisfactorily and this includes improving links with parents.



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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	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?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	4
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

11 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Snowsfields Primary School incorporating the Tim Jewell Unit for Children with Autism, London, SE1 3TD

You may remember that two inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know our findings.

Your school is a friendly place to be and is improving. We agree with you that you are well cared for and you mostly enjoy coming to school. Your headteacher is especially keen to make the school better for you. We agree that this is important, as it is not yet as good as it should be. We have asked the headteacher and teachers to make significant improvements for you. This is called a 'notice to improve' and has been given to the school because some of you could be helped to make better progress and reach higher levels in your work. Teachers are working hard to make learning more suitable for you and are doing well, but there is still more to do. In particular, we like the improvements that are being made in reading. Best of all we like the fact that you are all behaving better. So, well done and please keep this up. We agree with you that learning could be more fun and could stretch you more. Like you, we are pleased to hear that you are beginning to have more clubs and some of them sound great fun. We are impressed with how well you are getting on with eating healthily; please continue to work on this. Congratulations to almost all of you for coming to school and please encourage each other to come every day.

We have asked your headteacher and all of the adults in your school to do the following things:

- help you to improve your English and mathematics in particular, so that you have all of the skills needed for life in your secondary schools
- make more lessons good, so that you have plenty of challenges and meaningful activities
- provide more activities that are fun and relevant to you, so that you enjoy school as much as possible.

I was so pleased to see you enjoying the snow! I hope that your cookery club starts soon and that you have the chance to do more music, dance, design and technology, and gymnastics.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector