

Harbinger Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100904
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	323373
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Pickles

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)	306
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 Martin Young
Headteacher	Ms Mandy Boutwood
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cahir Street London E14 3QP
Telephone number	020 7987 1924
Fax number	020 7538 8966

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

Harbinger Primary School is a larger than average primary school. The majority of pupils live in the local area. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average, and the majority of pupils do not have English as their first language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average for a school of this size. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. These are mainly moderate learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Harbinger Primary is a good school where pupils achieve well because of the good teaching. Their personal development is even better through the outstanding provision for their social and emotional needs. As one parent said, 'I feel the school is fair, respectful and a brilliant place to learn for my child.' Standards are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 2. These standards represent good achievement because pupils enter the school with attainment that is well below the national average. The school's focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills means that by the time they leave, most pupils are articulate and confident in their use of language. The school's self-evaluation is good and provides a clear focus on raising standards for all pupils.

Teaching and learning are good, and some teaching is outstanding. Expectations are high, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1–3. Good relationships between staff and pupils across all year groups are a strength of the school. However, in some lessons it is unclear what pupils are expected to learn, making it difficult for pupils to assess their own progress. Marking in pupils' books is inconsistent and does not always tell pupils how to improve their work.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. By the time they leave the school they are confident and polite, and display high levels of independence. The positive outcomes are a direct result of the good leadership and management, which enthusiastically promote equality and inclusion of all pupils. Pupils greatly enjoy school, as is shown by their exemplary behaviour both during and outside of lessons. They learn to live, work and play together safely and harmoniously. The school is exceptionally successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It provides them with a wide range of experiences which enrich their learning and prepare them well for their future as young citizens. The school values and celebrates the culture and diversity of its local area, and provides pupils with excellent opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. Attendance is satisfactory, but is adversely affected by some pupils being out of school for extended periods of time.

The curriculum is good because it is very responsive to the pupils' wide range of needs and makes learning enjoyable. As one parent said, 'My children return home after a day at school desperate to learn more about what they have learnt at school.' Links across traditional subjects enable pupils to develop a broad perspective, and lessons are planned which provide a real life context. The curriculum is good because it helps pupils to understand how their learning is relevant to their life outside of school and to gain a perspective on international issues. Pupils have a good understanding of other faiths and cultures and how other people live.

Governors are very supportive of the school but do not provide adequate challenge or have effective systems to evaluate the school's performance. In particular, they are not carrying out their statutory duty regarding the headteacher's performance management. Parents and carers hold the school in high esteem, as confirmed by the parent questionnaire, where a very large majority of those who responded were overwhelmingly positive.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with levels of attainment well below those expected for their age, particularly in language and in personal and social skills. By the end of the Reception Year,

children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress from low starting points. There is a very strong emphasis on the promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development, which enables them to make excellent progress in this area of their learning. Children show good concentration and high levels of independence, and cooperate well with each other and with adults. They have good attitudes to their work, make good relationships and understand that they belong to a community. Standards of behaviour are good. Planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage effectively uses children's play ideas as a starting point. Although there are clear targets for individual children, these are not always sufficiently well incorporated into the teacher-led activities to ensure that all children achieve a faster rate of progress. Adults are well deployed to support learning. There is good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage, resulting in the seamless integration of provision for both Nursery and Reception age children. There are strong links with parents and carers and other agencies to support children's good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the role of the governing body to ensure that it provides appropriate challenge to the school and fulfils its responsibilities in respect of performance management.
- Ensure that marking of pupils' work is consistent across the school, and tells pupils how well they are doing and how to improve further.
- Share best practice in enabling pupils to know how to assess and improve their work, to ensure that all teaching is as good as the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Attainment in Year 2 has steadily improved and is now close to average. This represents a significant rise in standards over three years. Attainment in mathematics is higher than in English, but standards are also rising in reading and writing. Lesson observations, an analysis of the school's pupil-tracking data, and scrutiny of pupils' work, indicate that standards in Years 1 to 3 are continuing to improve. In 2008, standards at the end of Year 6 fell, and were below average, particularly in English. However, over time standards have been broadly average, although not enough pupils have been reaching the higher level 5.

Good teaching in Years 1, 2 and 3 enables pupils to make good progress. As a result of a clear focus on developing literacy, pupils' progress in reading and writing is accelerating. Although attainment at the end of Year 2 has been low in the past, there have been effective intervention strategies to raise standards, and pupils' progress by the end of Year 6 is good. The challenge for the school is to maintain at least good progress in Years 4 to 6 as attainment lower down the school rises. The school sets itself challenging targets, and in most years achieves them. In addition to the statutory targets for pupils in Year 6, the school sets challenging targets for pupils in all year groups and monitors their progress carefully. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers. This is because their individual needs are accurately identified and there is a range of well-targeted provision to support their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has sought to ensure that pupils develop a good sense of their own personal worth and are able to demonstrate that they value and respect others. It has been outstandingly

successful in this ambition. Pupils are mature, confident and self-assured. They make an excellent contribution to the school community, for example through membership of the school council, as librarians and as singing leaders who lead play activities for younger pupils at lunchtime. Equally important is the less formal contribution that pupils make through their care and concern for one another, their mutual support and their outstandingly good behaviour. As one pupil said, 'People here are so kind.' Pupils have well-developed collaborative and independent working skills, and this means that they are well prepared for the next steps in their learning. Their experience and understanding of the world of work is enhanced through the school's good links with local businesses. Due to a keenly shared sense of school and international community, pupils' moral, social and cultural development are outstanding.

Pupils are polite, friendly and happy. They all do their best to make both visitors and members of the school feel valued and welcome. Pupils who are new to the school say they make friends quickly and settle really well. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons hugely, and this is evident in the lessons observed. They also say they feel safe and secure in school and 'If there's any kind of problem teachers sort it out - and it works!' They move around the building with care, using the many flights of stairs calmly and sensibly. The wide range of clubs and sports, together with good curriculum provision for physical education, swimming, for personal, social and health education and for science, means that pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good, and is improving due to effective staff training and a more creative approach to planned activities during lessons. Teachers manage behaviour very well so that lessons are orderly, and pupils listen carefully and work together willingly. Strategies to reinforce high expectations in regard to pupils' behaviour are used consistently across all year groups. In the best lessons, pupils make excellent progress because teachers plan activities which are carefully matched to their ability levels, use a range of teaching strategies to actively engage pupils, and make expected learning outcomes clear. For example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 1, pupils demonstrated high levels of enjoyment because of the range of ways in which numbers were presented. In this lesson the new 'visualiser' was very well used to project an image of buttons for counting onto the interactive whiteboard (IWB). In an equally outstanding Year 3 science lesson, pupils were eager to solve the problem of how to clear water from the floor, a question posed on the IWB by a member of the cleaning staff.

In some lessons, however, planning does not always reflect the differing needs of pupils, or provide clear learning outcomes against which pupils can assess their own learning. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the school, and does not always indicate clearly what pupils need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets statutory requirements while extending opportunities to broaden pupils' understanding. To enliven learning, well-planned links are made with pupils' own lives, for example a project on Bangladesh used the life experiences of some pupils to enhance the understanding of other pupils in Year 5. The curriculum is further enlivened through making

explicit links between the modern world and the past. In the recent celebration of the school's centenary, members of the local community, former pupils and a local historian helped pupils examine the school's history. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to support learning, both in classrooms and in the designated ICT suite. Cultural development is strong. The curriculum provides a range of opportunities to enhance pupils' creative development. All pupils in Year 4 learn the violin, and pupils' singing is enthusiastic and melodic! There is a good range of extra-curricular provision, and the many clubs, such as music and design technology, and the range of sports and games are well supported and greatly appreciated by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for pupils' pastoral care, guidance and support is a significant strength, meaning that all pupils feel valued and well cared for. Good teaching and high expectations encourage pupils to enjoy learning, and promote good achievement. All adults are consistent in their use of the 'I statements', which are used to personalise discussions with pupils about how well they are doing and to reinforce high expectations. Safeguarding arrangements for pupils are robust. Checks on those who work in the school are thorough, and staff refresher training is up to date. Support for vulnerable pupils is effective in ensuring that they feel safe and secure and have positive attitudes to learning. Academic guidance and support across the school, however, is not consistent. In some classes marking is not effective. It makes too little reference to targets for improvement, does not set high enough expectations, and is insufficiently explicit about how pupils can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The commitment of the headteacher and her deputy to inclusion and the promotion of equality for all pupils is a key strength of the school. Leaders and managers at all levels have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through effective self-evaluation. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, despite the fact that some inconsistencies remain in monitoring and evaluating impact, particularly for governors. The management structure has been enhanced by the recent appointment of phase leaders, who have a clear understanding of their management responsibilities and a commitment to raising standards. The school is working closely with the local authority advisor through the Intensifying Support Programme, and clear systems of accountability for pupils' progress are in place. The school accurately uses assessment data to inform planning for improvement, but the monitoring of performance against outcomes needs to be developed. The governing body does not provide appropriate challenge and does not adequately monitor the school's performance. The governing body is not currently meeting the statutory requirement relating to the headteacher's performance management, which is overdue. The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding, because it plans and evaluates actions which reflect the faith, ethnic and cultural diversity of the local and wider communities. This contributes greatly to the high regard with which the school is held by parents and carers.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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	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?	1
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	4
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**

02 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harbinger Primary School, London, E14 3QP

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school when we visited recently, and thank you for helping us with our questions. We really enjoyed talking with you and found everything that you said very interesting. I thought you would like to know what we found out about your school.

We agree with you that the school is good. These are some of the things that are good about your school.

- You enjoy school and do well in your lessons.
- Children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception.
- You get on really well with each other and with adults in school.
- You behave very sensibly and are very kind to each other.
- Your teachers work really hard to help you learn, and make your lessons interesting.
- Your headteacher leads the school very well and makes sure that you enjoy your time at school and try your best.

Here are some of the things we have asked your school to do to make it even better.

- We have asked your governors to check more carefully how well you are working in school.
- We have asked the teachers to mark your work so it explains how you can make it better.
- We have asked the headteacher to make sure that every lesson is as good as the very best lessons.

You can help by continuing to work hard and using the teachers' comments to improve your writing.

Yours faithfully

Linda Pickles

Lead Inspector