

Bell Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101259
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	323431
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Trevor Davies

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)	380
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 John Hickman
Headteacher	Ms Elaine Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bell Lane Hendon London NW4 2AS
Telephone number	020 8203 3115
Fax number	020 8203 7636

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is larger than average. It has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in a Nursery and two Reception classes. The school serves a diverse community. English is not the first language for three quarters of the pupils. Fifty different languages are spoken in the school, with pupils of eastern European backgrounds forming the largest non-British group. Mobility, both in and out of the school, is very high, as is the proportion of pupils who have free school meals. A new headteacher was seconded to the school at the beginning of the current school year and was made permanent at Easter 2009. There is a Children's Centre on the school site, overseen by the headteacher and run by the Children's Centre manager.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It provides good support for pupils whose first language is not English, as it does for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result of the specialist and focused support they receive, these groups of pupils make good progress, especially those from Eastern Europe, some of whom make outstanding progress in mathematics.

Pupils join the school with standards below the national average. Progress is variable throughout the school. Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, and standards by the end of Year 6 continue to be broadly average. While progress is satisfactory overall, it is most variable in science, where standards are below average.

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well, and those with responsibilities take them very seriously. Pupils have a positive approach to the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, evident in their enthusiastic participation in sport and other physical activities. The many fundraising activities organised by the school council, both in the local area and for overseas charities, help pupils to develop good life skills. The school has strong partnerships with parents, other schools and outside institutions, which make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. For example, good links with the modern foreign language department of a local secondary school are encouraging pupils to broaden their horizons by learning Spanish.

The curriculum and teaching are satisfactory. Teaching is improving and teachers often make learning intentions clear to pupils. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to achieve. Most classrooms are vibrant, provide lively learning experiences, and have useful literacy and numeracy prompts to help pupils and boost their confidence. Recent procedures to improve tracking of pupils' academic progress have helped to identify those pupils who need more support. However, pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in setting their own personal targets in lessons. Most importantly, pupils are not fully involved in the assessment of their work so that they do not always know how to improve.

Care guidance and support are good. Pastoral support is very good. Vulnerable pupils are very effectively supported by the well-qualified experienced staff. Pupils know group targets but they do not yet have personal targets, or carry out self-assessment. This reduces their understanding of what they need to do to improve.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. It is at the heart of the community, has good links to families and reaches out into the local area through its charity work, links with a Jewish school, other faiths, and ActionAid in India.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is providing decisive leadership and a clear vision for the future direction of the school. The school now has a clearer understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and self-evaluation is detailed and unified. The school has accurately identified weaknesses in standards and achievement, and is working to improve these, although arrangements for reviewing and developing these areas are not yet fully in place. This indicates that the school's capacity for future improvement and its overall leadership and management are satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They develop well personally because relationships and care are good. Home visits, and the warm, nurturing environment ensure children settle quickly. Routines where they are encouraged to make choices and grow in independence ensure they enjoy their time at school. Children work well in groups and learn to share apparatus and toys well. Behaviour is well managed and staff successfully help children to avoid disputes with gentle discussion or distracting tactics.

Children make satisfactory progress in their learning. Letters and sounds are taught systematically and all adults use every opportunity to develop speaking and listening skills. The Nursery outside area provides good extended play opportunities and equipment to support children's physical development. Children in the two Reception groups mix well together in both the inside and outdoor areas. The outside area offers opportunities for children to find out about how things grow by planting different kinds of seeds. Children's skills are carefully monitored and evidence is kept in 'Special Books'. Management of the Early Years Foundation stage is good. All staff have a good understanding of the children's developmental needs and plan for these. The staff liaise well with the Children's Centre. This ensures, for example, that vulnerable children are identified, carefully monitored and given effective support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment and increase the rate of progress, throughout the school, particularly in science.
- Ensure that pupils are fully involved in the assessment of their work, and have specific personal targets so they know how to improve.
- Improve the rate of progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

A small proportion of 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

At the end of Year 2, standards are below average in reading, writing and science, following satisfactory progress. Progress accelerates in English and mathematics in Years 3 to 6. The impact of teaching how to blend letter names and sounds, and reading intervention groups throughout the school, means that by Year 6, standards are broadly average. Results in science continue to lag behind, because of lack of opportunities to investigate and carry out practical tasks. In 2008, standards in English and mathematics improved at a better rate than in previous years. This was because of an effective emphasis on language skills, and problem solving and calculation. Pupil progress is inconsistent from year to year. Overall standards are affected by the high proportion of pupils leaving the school throughout the year, particularly in Years 1 and 2. In some year groups pupils learn more quickly because assessments are more focused and because of good teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' respect their diverse cultures, look out for one another and are cheerful and well-behaved. Because of this, most classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils know what is right and wrong, and speaking to them shows that they hold strong moral attitudes. They conscientiously act as playground helpers or 'peer mediators' to help newly arrived children to settle in. The school council plays an effective role in representing the pupils' views. As one member proudly said, 'we make important decisions on behalf of our classmates and the school to make it even better'. Pupils enjoy school and most show this by attending regularly. They feel safe and say that bullying is dealt with quickly. Pupils take good advantage of the many opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle. They join in enthusiastically with the wide range of sporting and physical activities and have a very good understanding of the benefits of healthy eating. As a result, the school has achieved the Healthy School Award. Pupils' life skills are well developed. For example, in helping to choose their headteacher and deputy headteacher, decision-making skills are nurtured. Pupils are made aware of those less fortunate than themselves, and willingly raise money.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Following effective monitoring by the senior leadership team, there is now improved consistency between year groups. In many lessons, there is a purposeful atmosphere, with pupils actively involved in and enjoying their learning. One child described his mathematics lesson as fun, and pupils in an English lesson enthusiastically explained their adverts for 'funky torches and impressive lights'. Teaching assistants give good, effective guidance to help those who need additional support, particularly those pupils whose first language is not English, and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Sometimes planning is not sufficiently detailed to ensure that each lesson builds well on pupils' previous learning. In these lessons, learning objectives are not clear or shared with pupils, so that they are not always clear about the purpose of each activity. Teachers do not sufficiently use marking to help pupils establish the next steps to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has recently been reviewed to better meet the needs of learners and to reflect the diverse community it serves. There is a strong emphasis on basic skills, with a wide range of support programmes for literacy and numeracy throughout the school. The curriculum includes interesting special topics, themed events and cultural weeks such as Black History month and Refugee Week, which serve to develop understanding and respect. These stimulate pupils' interests and enthusiasm for learning. Music, sport, gardening, and the creative arts, especially dance, are also strong features. There is a wide range of enrichment activities, including visits and visitors and many links with local schools. Spanish has been introduced into the curriculum with help from the secondary school. Although differentiated activities are evident in lessons, and successfully support lower-ability groups, these sometimes provide insufficient levels of challenge for higher-achieving pupils. Developments to improve science in the school are being introduced, but these have not yet had time to have a significant impact.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are very positive about the way staff develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. 'My daughter is now a confident, happy child, mainly thanks to the school', was the comment of one parent. Effective health and safety arrangements are regularly reviewed and all staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to child protection issues. Throughout the school, relationships are good and pupils have confidence in their teachers and other adults. Vulnerable pupils are sensitively supported because the school has a strong commitment to inclusion and uses the good work of a variety of agencies very effectively. Pupils who speak English as a second language receive effective support and consequently make good progress. Individual education plans for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are written clearly so that pupils know what they are trying to achieve. New procedures to track pupils' progress systematically over time are starting to help raise standards and improve progress. Pupils are not always aware of their short-term targets, and are not always given enough feedback in the marking of their work, which would help them to drive their learning forward more rapidly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although only recently appointed, the headteacher has already had a clear impact on the direction of the school. Parents speak impressively about her leadership and her kind, fair, caring, understanding relationship with both pupils and parents. Assisted by her senior team, she has introduced clear, consistent systems to drive school improvement forward. As a result, the school has accurately identified its strengths, as well as the areas it needs to improve. Already, well-linked intervention strategies have been introduced to improve reading standards in the school. The school has begun to implement a wide range of monitoring and evaluation procedures. While these are only partially developed, particularly in science, and in pupil assessment, they are beginning to improve the rate of pupils' progress. The governors are proactive in the life of the school, but are only just beginning to develop a greater understanding of their role in challenging, as well as supporting the school, in order to make it better.

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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?	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?	2

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	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?	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?	2

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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

02 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bell Lane Primary School, London, NW4 2AS

Thank you for being helpful and making us welcome when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you all, talking to you at lunchtime and in lessons, and looking at your work. It is very clear that you enjoy coming to school. We think that the school is improving and is providing you with a satisfactory education. This means that it does some things well, but that other things could be improved. Below are some of the things we have judged that the school does well.

Your standard of work and the progress you make in lessons is just beginning to improve. You are well-behaved and well-mannered. You make good friendships, play well together and have good attitudes to your work in lessons.

You have lots of opportunities in the school to learn about and to develop a healthy lifestyle, and in particular we liked the way you have developed and use your school vegetable garden.

There are three things we have asked the school to do to help you improve further:

- improve the standards of work in your English and mathematics, but especially in science
- involve you more fully in marking and reviewing your work, and ensure that you have your own personal targets so that you know how to improve
- improve the progress of children in the Nursery and Reception classes.

You can help the school make these improvements by trying to do your best work at all times and continuing to enjoy your time at school. Remember to ask teachers if you need help.

Yours faithfully

Trevor Davies

Lead Inspector