

Deansbrook Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101273
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	323436
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Nigel Grimshaw

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	348
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Selwyn Arnold
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Livingstone
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2006
School address	Hale Drive Mill Hill London NW7 3ED
Telephone number	020 8959 3423
Fax number	020 8201 0492

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Deansbrook is a larger-than-average junior school. It serves an area of significant cultural diversity. Well over half of the pupils have a first language other than English and nearly half of these are at an early stage of learning English. Between them, pupils speak 41 different languages. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average and many of these pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is very high. The school has gained a range of awards, including the Healthy School award and the Information and Communication Technology Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It has retained and built on many of the outstanding aspects identified at the last inspection. The headteacher has provided an energetic and enthusiastic lead role over many years and is very well supported by a committed leadership team and a strong governing body. A powerful sense of teamwork has been developed and everyone, including parents, works extremely well together for the benefit of the pupils. The parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. As one parent wrote, 'The staff at Deansbrook are an outstanding team – approachable and understanding.' As a consequence, pupils' academic achievement and personal development are outstanding.

Teaching and learning are consistently of high quality. Teachers and teaching assistants are extremely hard-working and form excellent teams in lessons to support and develop the pupils' learning. Lessons are planned to motivate and enthuse the pupils, often supported by visits and visitors to the school, such as recent trips to the National Gallery and the excellent 'Egyptian Day' in school during the inspection. There are examples of excellent marking of pupils' work, but this is inconsistent and in a minority of classes pupils are not given sufficient guidance on their next steps for improvement. The curriculum is well designed to link together the different subjects to make pupils' learning more meaningful and enjoyable. It is enriched through a good range of extra-curricular activities, some of which are provided by external expertise. There are good links with the other local schools to provide further opportunities for the pupils.

As one outcome of the well-planned lessons, pupils greatly enjoy coming to school. A parent commented, 'My child likes to get up and can't wait to get into school in the morning.' Pupils feel extremely safe and secure at school and are at ease in approaching adults if they have any concerns. Relationships within the school are excellent and pupils of all cultures and backgrounds work and play together exceptionally well. Pupils have many opportunities to be active through physical education lessons and sports activities outside school hours. Behaviour is exemplary because pupils are so involved in their work in lessons and show excellent social skills in the wider school environment.

The consistently outstanding teaching and the pupils' positive attitudes to school and their work ensure that progress is excellent. A significant minority of pupils enter the school at other than the usual times and their English language skills are at a very low level. They make outstanding progress because of the specialist advice received and implemented by the school. All pupils make at least good progress and many groups, such as pupils for whom English is not their first language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress. This is because of the excellent support they receive. The more-able pupils also achieve outstandingly well because of the opportunities made available to them by the school. Consequently, standards across the school are rising.

The care provided by the adults in school is outstanding. Safeguarding the welfare of pupils is a high priority for the school and this is reflected in parental views. The staff know the pupils exceptionally well and, consequently, meet their needs both in lessons and in the wider school community. This is because the assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are rigorous and accurate and are used to plan their next steps for learning. Pupils are clear about these next steps but marking of their work is inconsistent and does not always help them to improve their work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of marking is more consistent and provides all pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The pupils who enter the school in Year 3 do so with standards of attainment broadly in line with national averages. However, a significant and increasing minority of pupils enter the school later with little or no English language skills. Those pupils who join the school after the normal starting point receive outstanding support and make excellent progress. The pupils receive a warm welcome so that they settle quickly and are soon given an individual education programme designed to meet their own particular needs, particularly in their language development. All groups of pupils make at least good progress in English, mathematics and science and several groups make outstanding progress. In recent years pupils reached standards in mathematics, English and science that were broadly average. Recent excellent progress across the school has quickly raised standards to be above average. In the current Year 6 pupils' attainment has improved significantly. Across other year groups current levels of attainment are above expectations and progress continues to be rapid. This is particularly so where the school has identified and addressed subject areas for improvement, such as science and writing, in the last two years. Standards in aspects such as information and communication technology (ICT), music and the other creative arts are all higher than would be expected for this age group.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils really enjoy school and are unfailingly friendly and polite. Their behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. They are keen to do well in lessons and are very supportive of one another. The school is a very harmonious community where pupils of all backgrounds get on extremely well together. When asked to comment on the best things about the school, one pupil said, 'I like it here because it is multi-cultural. We are able to share with others of all faiths and cultures.' Attendance is average. Pupils are very aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They talk with authority about balanced diets and participate with enthusiasm in the wide range of sporting activities on offer. Almost without exception, parents say that their children are safe in school and this is echoed by pupils. They say that bullying is very rare and all feel confident in the adults around them if they have a problem. Pupils are proud of their school and the contribution they make in various roles, notably in the school council. One councillor, to the obvious approval of others, indicated that they 'try to make the school a better place'. They raise money to improve the playground equipment and for a variety of charities. They were very pleased that, as a result of appealing to parents in a newsletter, there was no longer any smoking outside the gates! Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning, together with their very good progress in basic skills and ready facility with ICT, ensure that they are extremely well prepared for secondary school and the world beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

All the lessons observed were judged to be at least good and several were outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour. They focus on making lessons interesting and fun and consequently pupils are motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. As one pupil commented, 'Teachers let you have a go at working out your own answers and they don't pressurise you.' Planning and resources are used well to provide a structure to the lessons. Pace is good in almost all lessons and this keeps the pupils focused on their work. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is a strength of the school. Much credit for this includes the excellent contribution of the teaching assistants who work extremely well in partnership with the teachers. Support for pupils for whom English is not their first language is outstanding because staff act on advice from specialist support and focus on the needs of each individual pupil. There are examples of good-quality marking, but this is inconsistent and consequently does not always provide pupils with enough guidance on their next steps for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum provides extremely well for pupils' academic needs and allows them to be creative and really enjoy their learning. Learning is planned around broad themes that allow pupils to see how the different aspects of their learning fit together. ICT is used extensively to support pupils' learning and the school's innovative approach to new technology is recognised by a national award. For example, the 'children's creative' programme allows pupils to log on at home and write books for publication! This has been particularly successful in motivating some previously reluctant writers. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of clubs and visits and visitors. For example, during the inspection Year 4 pupils were really enjoying the Egyptian Day that brought their learning vividly to life. Spanish is also well established and taught to a high level. Creativity and the performing arts have a high profile in the school and some specialist teaching contributes to the high quality of provision in these areas.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All adults in the school show a strong sense of commitment in safeguarding the welfare of the pupils and promoting their health and safety. The school's policies and procedures for risk assessment and child protection are securely in place and are very well understood by staff. The school keeps very good records of the checks made on the background of the staff and other adults working in the school. It pays exceptionally good attention to the development of safe and healthy lifestyles. This was evident in a Year 3 lesson, where pupils showed very clear understanding of the difference between food and drugs. The good provision has led to Deansbrook gaining the Healthy School and Activemark awards. The school has worked hard to develop ways to promote good attendance and punctuality, which are improving.

Support for vulnerable pupils is very strong as their needs are identified accurately and their progress is tracked very carefully. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language receive very effective support based on their needs. Academic guidance and support for pupils are good and pupils know their targets well. Teachers

know their pupils' needs very well and monitor their academic progress systematically. They spend much time guiding pupils during lessons and set targets in a way that lets pupils know what they need to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides very strong leadership for the school through a relentless pursuit of the best possible opportunities for the pupils to develop their learning. She maintains excellent relationships with staff and parents and is well supported by a committed leadership team. There is a strong sense of teamwork within the school. This is coupled with outstanding teaching and, as a result, all groups of pupils throughout the school make outstanding progress overall. Assessments are more accurate than previously and, consequently, the tracking of pupils' progress is more rigorous and informative. With the very wide range of cultures within the school and the evidence of genuine harmony, community cohesion within the school is outstanding. The school is inclusive with an excellent involvement within the local community. Through assemblies and project work, such as the Black History Month and the links with a school in Spain, pupils have a very good awareness of other communities in the United Kingdom, and of global issues. There are excellent links with other local providers and support services. Governance is good because governors are well informed, actively involved and care deeply about the school. They provide good levels of challenge and have a clear view of the strengths of the school and the priorities for improvement. The governors are regular visitors into school but their monitoring role lacks rigour.

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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
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**

25 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Deansbrook Junior School, London, NW7 3ED

On behalf of your inspectors I would like to thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and visiting your lessons. You are very polite and extremely well behaved and we agree with you that your school is outstanding and that it does a lot to help you to achieve so well.

We were glad to hear that you enjoy school so much. Your teachers and other staff care about you and work extremely hard to help you to be successful. You have excellent attitudes towards your work and the really good teaching helps you to learn well. Your teachers plan carefully to make your learning interesting and fun. They organise many exciting activities and encourage you to take part in a great number of clubs and visits. You are lucky to have such a broad range of opportunities to develop your skills in many areas, and we thought your music and artwork were absolutely marvellous. Your headteacher, other members of staff and the governors work closely together, lead the school very well and are always trying to make it even better. Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school because they also think it is excellent.

We have asked the teachers to do the following to make your school even better.

- Make sure that their marking explains what you need to do next to improve your work. You can help by looking at the marking in your books and remembering the next steps you need to take.

Thank you once again for your help and friendliness. We hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and we wish you and the school all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Nigel Grimshaw

Lead Inspector