

Moss Hall Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101295
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	323442
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	270
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	Mrs Shirley Bilgora
Headteacher	Mr Robin Warren
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Moss Hall Grove Finchley London N12 8PE
Telephone number	020 8445 9735
Fax number	020 8445 8067

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The school was visited for one day. The inspectors investigated the following issues in detail: provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leaders and managers. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, curriculum and planning documents, observation of the school at work, interviews with staff, pupils and governors, and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average-sized infant school. It is popular and oversubscribed. Around two thirds of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. More than half speak English as an additional language with the majority of these pupils at an early stage of learning English. Eight pupils are from families who have sought refuge in the United Kingdom. A broadly average proportion of pupils find learning difficult and/or have disabilities. These include pupils who find learning difficult and some with emotional and behavioural problems. The school has provision for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage in three Reception classes. In addition to a breakfast club run by the school, a privately run company provides after school care.

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 where pupils make excellent progress and reach above-average standards. The potent combination of outstanding teaching, an extremely rich curriculum and meticulous care and guidance is much appreciated by parents. They are unanimous in praise for the school. Typical of their comments were, 'I couldn't think of a better school for my children. They have very different skills and both are wonderfully cared for', and, 'The school has a warm and inclusive atmosphere where all feel valued and involved.' The positive ethos owes much to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. He is extremely well supported by senior staff and has the confidence of the staff, parents and governors. He plays a pivotal role in inspiring pupils to believe in themselves and to work hard.

As children start in Reception, their skills and understanding are broadly as expected of the age group. As many are at an early stage of speaking English, they lack confidence in this area of learning. Due to the excellent provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children progress very well. By the end of Reception, almost all children achieve a good level of development and many reach a good level of overall achievement. This provides a flying start for subsequent years and pupils' thirst for learning is evident throughout Years 1 and 2. Lessons are a hive of activity. Skilfully encouraged by their teachers, pupils are extremely well motivated, attentive and cooperative. Teachers keep a close eye on each pupil's progress, which enables them to plan work at the right level of challenge. Pupils who find learning difficult or have emotional or behavioural problems, receive excellent support by teachers and their assistants. They are rarely withdrawn from class lessons for this support, which means they take a full part in all curriculum activities.

As a result of the outstanding provision, all groups, including the more able, make excellent progress. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average. Standards in writing in 2008 were exceptionally high, reflecting the success of the school in building on pupils' prior attainment and especially the effective provision for pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to reach similar levels across the board.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is a product of the way the school promotes self-esteem and regularly articulates its core values, together with a very well-planned programme for personal, social and health education. Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and are very happy to come to school. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, for example when moving around the school or when crossing the road. They know that all adults in the school will help them if they need it and this encourages their feelings of safety. They work and play together extremely well and show very considerate attitudes to one another and to their teachers. Pupils are keen to contribute ideas through the school council and by willingly taking on day-to-day responsibilities. Community cohesion is promoted very effectively. The school is a harmonious community where pupils and staff from a wide range of cultural backgrounds get on well together. Pupils are developing an early awareness of European and global matters. They learn French and Spanish, and curriculum themes are often centred on different countries. Their independence is encouraged in and out of lessons and they understand the differences between right and wrong. Pupils know that a balanced diet and regular exercise contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Their excellent progress in learning basic skills and their strong cooperative and independent attitudes prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional and securely underpinned by the school's inclusive ethos. Values, such as responsibility, respect, and trust, are promoted extremely well. During an outstanding assembly, pupils across the age range expressed delight for their classmates during the presentation of the weekly 'star awards' and reflected on how they themselves could show kindness and consideration for others.

Pastoral care and academic guidance are first class. Teachers provide excellent feedback during lessons and through their careful marking. Pupils understand the symbols staff use to indicate good work or what they need to do next. They increasingly assess their own work, helped by clear targets negotiated and agreed with their teachers. Safeguarding procedures are robust and pupils soon build strong and trusting relationships because they feel secure in the knowledge that adults will listen to them and respond to their needs; as one parent remarked, 'She has been cared for and nurtured and is treated with respect.' Pupils with emotional or behavioural problems benefit from sensitive and effective help. Several parents paid tribute to the excellent support provided for individuals. One wrote, 'The children are the top priority and each child is judged on their own merits.' Care extends outside the school day with a well-organised breakfast club where children, including those of Reception age and those from the neighbouring junior school, mix well and enjoy a good range of stimulating activities.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher successfully drive the pursuit of excellence. Self-evaluation is accurate and realistic, and reveals strengths and areas for improvement. For example, the careful monitoring of pupils' work accurately revealed inconsistencies in the standard of presentation and handwriting and this is now a school priority. Similarly, monitoring of lessons by subject leaders showed that there was some unnecessary repetition in the teaching of calculation skills, which has yet to be fully rectified. All staff and governors play a strong part in ensuring that the school maintains its current standards and pursues further improvement. The governors work extremely successfully to support the school's work. They visit regularly to meet subject leaders and discuss how things are going and ask questions about pupils' performance. The school's excellent capacity to improve is evident from the good progress made since the last inspection. Provision for more able pupils has improved and is reflected in the rise in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. Very good headway has been made in improving attendance through a range of incentives. The school has excellent relationships with parents, neighbouring schools and local organisations and this cohesive approach is strong factor in its success. One parent summed this up by commenting, 'Moss Hall Infant School is living proof that it takes a community to raise a child.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in all areas of learning. All teaching staff work very well together as a team. They use their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively to plan and organise teaching to maximise learning opportunities for children. The appropriate focus on developing children's speaking and listening skills in English, and the many opportunities to practise the skills they learn, contribute greatly to their progress in developing communication, language and literacy skills. During work centred around the story of 'The Meanies', for example, children discussed ideas with their talking partners and then confidently offered their comments about the characters. Staff then encouraged the children to use some of the vocabulary they had used in their subsequent writing, building well on their existing knowledge of letters and sounds. An excellent and stimulating range of adult-led and child-initiated activities enable

children to explore, play and develop at a fast pace. A 'visit from the Meanies overnight' raised many indignant comments about how they had messed up the classroom and prompted role play, letter-writing and collage work.

Children demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy school and exhibit trusting and caring relationships with all the adults. Routines are clearly established to ensure safety in moving around the stimulating, well-equipped indoor and outdoor areas. Children show high levels of independence as they select from a wide range of resources, use them sensibly and return them to their allotted place afterwards. This was evident from the intense concentration as children used construction apparatus carefully. Such approaches successfully encourage children to make their own decisions and make the right choices. Even the youngest children decided it was best to put on wellington boots before playing on the muddy grass. All welfare requirements are fully met. Children from different backgrounds and cultures play and work together harmoniously and behave well. Management is excellent so things run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Assessment procedures are used very well to track children's progress systematically and inform the next steps for their learning. Continuous self-review informs development planning and this approach has contributed to the high level of provision being sustained since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sustain the focus on handwriting and presentation skills to ensure consistency across year groups.
- Ensure pupils refine and extend their calculation strategies as they move through the school to further improve their problem-solving skills.

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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?	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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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	2
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	1
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	1
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**

10 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Moss Hall Infant School, London, N12 8PE

Thank you for being so welcoming when my colleague and I visited your school. Your school is very successful and extremely well run. It is an excellent school, just as you and your parents told us it was. It helps all of you to make outstanding progress in your learning and in your personal skills. Your teachers and teaching assistants are very good at helping you to do your very best, and lessons are interesting and great fun. Teachers make sure you know the next small steps you need to take in order to move your learning forward and we were pleased to see that many of you are beginning to look at your own work and spotting what you need to do to improve. You are responsible and hard-working, and you set a very fine example of how to behave. You clearly enjoy everything about your school, which is very good at keeping you safe and caring for you.

School leaders do a really good job in seeing that the school keeps improving. They look at your work regularly to check on how well you are doing. Recently they saw that, although most of you try very hard to improve your handwriting and make all your work neat, some children do not realise how important this is. We agree with your teachers that everyone needs to be able to write neatly and set out their work well.

Your teachers plan lessons very well so that each day you learn something new. They link subjects together to make lessons more interesting. For example, when Year 2 children were learning how to set out their findings in science, they were using bullet points that they had practised in literacy. Most children are good at tackling number problems, but we agree with your teachers that some of you could be taught new ways of working things out to help you become even better at finding answers quickly.

Adults see to it that you have a very interesting range of activities, clubs and visits. We enjoyed talking to you about what you like, finding out how much you help in school and hearing your ideas for making it even better.

We wish you all the very best.

Yours faithfully

Rob Crompton

Lead Inspector