

Altmore Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102709
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	323676
Inspection date	5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Pritiben Patel

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	468
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	120
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jeremy Evans
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Rowlands
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Altmore Avenue London E6 2BX
Telephone number	020 8472 3555
Fax number	020 8470 6126

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

Two Additional Inspectors carried out this inspection. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How effective are strategies to improve the attainment of more-able pupils in reading and mathematics?
- How effective are strategies to improve attendance?

The inspectors gathered evidence from performance data, observations of teaching, the work produced by pupils, and observations of the pupils at play and at lunch. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, representatives of the governing body and some members of staff also contributed to the judgements.

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, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Altmore is a large school. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and are at the early stages of learning English. The largest group is of Asian origin. The majority language is Tamil. A third of the school population is made up of refugees and asylum seekers. More pupils than usual are entitled to claim free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. These pupils have mostly speech and language difficulties or emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. None have a statement of special educational need. The school's provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has breakfast and after school provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Altmore is a good school. It provides pupils with a highly supportive and caring environment in which they flourish. Pupils and parents alike hold the school and staff in high regard. The following comment made by a parent was typical of most when they wrote, 'The school is doing excellent work in building the overall character and personality of my daughter.' Pupils' welfare is at the centre of all decision-making and the contribution pupils make is good. For example, they contribute to curriculum planning, they designed the school toilets and help each other in the playground through their role as 'playground heroes'.

The care, guidance and support provided are outstanding, including that given to the very high numbers of pupils who are new to English as well as refugee and asylum seekers. Induction systems are carefully thought out, and as a result pupils settle quickly into school life. Safeguarding arrangements are securely in place. In this nurturing environment pupils' personal development is good. They behave well and feel safe in school. Pupils say if they have any problems they will happily talk to an adult. Their adoption of healthy lifestyles is good as they grow their own food and take part in a range of physical activities such as football and dance. The school has been awarded the Healthy School Award in recognition of this. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have opportunities to reflect in assembly and participate in collective worship, as well as raise money for others less fortunate than themselves. In addition, pupils' understanding of different cultures and religions is very good.

Pupils make good progress from exceptionally low starting points and go on to attain standards which are broadly average. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their schooling. Many pupils make outstanding progress to reach average standards, but achievement is good overall because the progress of a small minority of pupils is adversely affected by their irregular attendance. Assessment information for 2008 shows that standards in writing were above average, as the school had focused on giving pupils more opportunities to practise their writing skills across the curriculum. The school has identified that attainment for more-able pupils could also be improved in reading and mathematics. As a result, pupils are given increasingly challenging texts to read in literacy and they are also being encouraged to read a wide range of text types. In numeracy, pupils are being given greater opportunities to solve complex problems. This is beginning to pay dividends.

The curriculum is outstanding because links between subjects are made in innovative ways, and this makes learning more meaningful for pupils. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of different pupils very well and allows them to work creatively. This has an outstanding impact on their enjoyment. In recognition of this, the school has been awarded the Artsmark Gold award. Learning is brought to life by, for example, pupils celebrating their visit to the Natural History Museum with paintings, writing and photographs during an assembly. A range of visitors such as African story-tellers and theatre groups also make learning highly enjoyable.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers create vibrant classrooms for pupils in which to learn. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. The high adult-to-pupil ratio ensures that pupils new to English and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support, which helps them to make good progress. Activities are practical and encourage good independent skills. For example, in a numeracy lesson pupils were busy sorting shapes while in a history lesson they were discussing the historical significance of the contents of a suitcase.

However, teachers' marking does not consistently help pupils to understand what they need to do next to improve their work.

The headteacher leads the school well. She sets a clear direction for the school and knows pupils individually. She has worked hard to establish a culture where pupils are respected and feel valued. This ethos is embraced by all staff who work hard to meet the individual needs of pupils. Subject leaders have a good understanding about the strengths as well as areas for development within their areas, including leaders who are new to their role. Senior leaders have identified that pupil attendance is satisfactory and needs improving. With good support from the governing body various strategies have been employed, such as writing to parents, presenting pupils with a weekly attendance cup as well as setting up a parents group. However, these actions have not yet had an impact.

The headteacher has established an outstanding range of partnerships with outside organisations in order to maximise provision for pupils, including the local authority, other schools, sports coaches and health professionals. Community cohesion, too, is outstanding, because the school is meeting the needs of the local community very well. For instance, the development of the outreach centre has enabled the school to facilitate literacy, numeracy, English language and parenting classes for all community members. The school itself is also a drop-in point for parents needing help and advice. In addition, breakfast and after school clubs are provided to help meet the needs of working parents. Based on a solid track record of good progress, capacity to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children on entry to the Nursery have exceptionally low skills and almost all speak English as an additional language. Staff who speak Tamil provide excellent care and support for those children new to English. Children settle into routines quickly because of the outstanding care and sensitive support they receive from the teachers and support staff. They make good progress by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their physical, social and independence skills as well as in their attitudes to learning. However, their overall attainment is below what is expected for children of this age, particularly in communication, language and literacy.

Children make good progress in their learning because of good planning and teaching. The classroom environment is well thought out to maximise children's interest and learning. Staff make careful notes about children's learning which then help them to plan their next steps. The organisation of activities is good and the curriculum in both the Nursery and Reception is stimulating. There is a good balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Children learn in a happy and safe environment.

Leadership is good. The Early Years Foundation Stage manager has a good understanding about strengths as well as areas for development. She has plans in place to improve the outdoor environment to enhance children's learning. The Nursery and Reception staff work well together and this benefits children during transition.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by ensuring pupils know what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Take further action to improve pupil attendance.

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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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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?	2
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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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?	2
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?	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	2
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	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**

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Altmore Infant School, London, E6 2BX

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for helping us when we came to visit you to find out how well you are getting on. We really enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to some of you. You made it clear to us that you enjoy school very much.

We agree with you and your parents that Altmore is a good school.

Here is a list of just some of the things that we found out about your school.

- You make good progress and reach average standards by the end of Year 2.
- All staff at the school care for you very well and in turn you feel well respected, happy and behave well. You all said a lot of nice things about your school and your teachers.
- The quality of teaching and learning are good. Your teachers plan interesting activities for you that mean you have to think for yourself. For example, some of you in a history lesson were discussing what the things inside a suitcase tell you about what life was like a long time ago.
- The curriculum is outstanding and you have opportunities to visit museums, the seaside and art galleries.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make a good start.
- All the adults in your school such as your headteacher, class teachers, support staff and governors work hard to ensure you are very happy and very well cared for and make good progress in your learning.

Even in a good school like yours there are some areas that can always be improved. I have asked your headteacher to improve attendance, because if you are not at school, you are missing out on your learning. Also, I have asked your teachers to make clear to you what you need to do next to improve your work, so that you can make even better progress. I am sure that you will continue to work hard, enjoy school and do your very best.

Yours faithfully

Pritiben Patel

Lead Inspector