

Ellen Wilkinson Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102759
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	323687
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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)	445
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 Dawn Hutcheon
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Ferguson
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	Tollgate Road London E6 5UP
Telephone number	020 7511 9414
Fax number	020 7474 0809

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 much bigger than average. It caters for pupils from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, including an increasing proportion of Eastern European origin. Two thirds of the pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Principally these are moderate learning and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils' mobility is high, with large numbers joining the school partway through their primary education. The school shares a site with a privately run nursery and a children's centre, each of which were separately inspected. The school operates a breakfast club. The school is currently in the middle of an extensive five-year building improvement programme. Over the past year several staff, including the headteacher and other school leaders, have been away temporarily on maternity leave.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ellen Wilkinson Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has had particular success in creating a caring environment and harmonious community where pupils get on well together and are increasingly eager to learn. As one very satisfied parent commented, 'Our daughter is very happy at Ellen Wilkinson. She wants to go to school every day.' Another explained that 'the school has been a big influence in shaping my daughter into the bright, confident child that she has become'.

Although standards are below average, this represents satisfactory achievement in the light of pupils' low starting points. There has been a steady rise in standards in Years 1 and 2. This improvement has not been so evident in Years 3 to 6 because standards, especially in English, have been affected by the number of children who, when they join the school from overseas, are at an early stage of learning English. Nevertheless, these pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Those pupils who start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and stay at the school through until the end of Year 6 also achieve satisfactorily overall. They are increasingly catching up on ground lost in the years before the last inspection, when the school was not as effective. This is certainly recognised by parents who say that 'the school has really progressed as compared to previous years'.

Teachers manage their classes well so that even those pupils who struggle with behavioural difficulties are settled and well behaved. Teachers generally succeed in motivating the pupils and getting them involved. Sometimes, however, lessons take too long to get started. This loss of pace means that opportunities for learning are missed. Teaching assistants are used well to support those who need extra help with their learning, but work is not always challenging enough for the more-able pupils. Imaginative links are developed between different subjects, and these contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school. However, pupils are not always helped enough to develop their key skills through, for example, writing in subjects other than English. Teachers' marking in some subjects gives pupils helpful guidance on how to improve their work, but spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in writing in other subjects too often go uncorrected. Pupils have individual targets in English and mathematics, but these are only a recent development in some classes and they are not all kept up to date, so they do not give pupils as much help as they could in improving their work. It is for these reasons that the quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall, despite very good provision for pupils' welfare.

The headteacher, school leaders, staff and governors know the school well. They have ambitious plans to raise attainment and to drive forward improvements. However, many leaders are new to their roles and there have been setbacks due to the temporary gaps in the leadership team. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Monitoring of lessons and pupils' work has accurately identified how to move learning on, but staff absences have delayed action to make the necessary improvements. The school improvement plan does not provide a sharp enough management tool for leaders and governors because it does not set out clear, measurable targets against which the school can measure its success.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start in the Nursery with skills and capabilities that are well below those expected for their ages. Many have little English. Management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The children get off to a good start, although progress is faster in Nursery than in the Reception Year because Nursery staffing has been more stable. Changes of staff in Reception have impeded the extending and sharing of best practice. Standards by the start of Year 1 are below average, but children do particularly well in their early mathematical skills and in aspects of their personal development. Children make satisfactory progress in their learning because teaching is satisfactory. Thanks to home visits before they start, the children are helped to settle quickly. These induction arrangements also enable staff to liaise with parents and gain insight into children's needs, using this information, in turn, to plan appropriate activities for the children. Letters and sounds are taught systematically and all adults use every opportunity to develop speaking and listening skills. The newly refurbished outside area provides excellent extended play opportunities and equipment to support children's physical development. Children take delight in riding wheeled toys, or playing trains with large construction blocks, especially when using the walkie-talkies. They thoroughly enjoy painting on a large scale with big brushes. However, opportunities are missed to encourage greater independence. For example, at the beginning of the day, when children are keen to get started, those in Reception are expected to sit passively waiting to be registered when they could be picking out their names to register and then choosing activities for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that in all lessons pupils' learning is moved on at a brisk pace and that work is matched to pupils' different abilities, particularly to ensure that more-able pupils are extended and challenged.
- Give pupils clear guidance through marking and targets that shows them what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school improvement plan as a management tool by including measurable targets that enable leaders and governors to better gauge success.

A small proportion of the 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

Given their low starting points, pupils' below-average attainment represents satisfactory achievement. For many of those joining the school partway through their primary education, including those who are new to the country and who have little English, the progress made is rapid. The older pupils who have been at the school from the start of Year 1 are now making faster progress as they catch up on years in the past when many had underachieved. The support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to make similar progress to the others in their classes. A parent described how 'my son had delayed speech but the teachers included him in everything they did in class. Now his speech is almost perfect.' It is the more-able pupils who do not all do as well as they should. This is because they are not always set work that is challenging enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils from diverse backgrounds work, play and get on well with one another. They greatly enjoy the opportunities they have to learn about their own and each other's different cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem. When it does occur, they are confident that teachers deal with it well. Pupils have positive views about all aspects of their school. They particularly appreciate the wide range of sporting activities available for them and enjoy the opportunities now provided for discussions when 'we learn how to put our point across'. Many are no longer shy about expressing their opinions! Although most pupils attend regularly and are punctual, overall attendance, though improved, is still below the national average. This is despite the school's careful monitoring and the rigorous efforts made to discourage parents from taking their children out of school in term time. Pupils appreciate the certificates and medals they achieve for good attendance. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to be safe, for example in handling equipment or when using the internet. They also have a good knowledge of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Their economic well-being is developing through basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) which are satisfactory. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community through the responsibilities they take on and through charity fund-raising. The school council has been instrumental in choosing 'wet playtime' games and activities but would like meetings to be held more regularly. Although the pupils take a growing pride in the school, many take too little pride in the presentation of their work. Some otherwise good-quality work is let down by its scruffy appearance. In some cases, it is the untidiness of the work that gives rise to avoidable errors.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Classes are well managed. Consequently, behaviour in lessons is good and pupils are keen to do their best. Adult support is generally used well in lessons, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those new to learning English. At times, however, introductions to lessons are too long and the pace of learning is too slow. During introductions teachers share with pupils what they are going to be learning in lessons. However, this often tends to be the task they are to carry out rather than the particular skills pupils are expected to acquire. This means that pupils cannot readily gauge their own success in moving their learning on. Teachers' questioning is effective in helping pupils to think about their learning. Teachers tend, however, to draw responses from those with their hands up, rather than encouraging more contributions from those less eager to volunteer. Teachers use assessment information well to group pupils by ability in lessons, but too often pupils with a wide range of different abilities are given the same work to do. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are usually able to cope because they benefit from good support from teaching assistants. For more-able pupils, however, the work can be too easy and these pupils therefore make less progress than they should.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Recent temporary gaps in leadership and management have slowed leaders' plans for further curriculum development. Nevertheless, the school has started to make links between subjects to create a more interesting and thematic approach to learning. Key skills, including writing and ICT, are increasingly being developed in this way. However, insufficient attention is paid to the different levels at which pupils should be working in this thematic approach to ensure that all make the best progress possible. Mistakes in pupils' writing or in the way they draw graphs that would be corrected in pupils' literacy or numeracy books go uncorrected in other subjects, which limits the contribution this work makes to developing pupils' basic skills. A good range of visits and visitors provides first-hand learning experiences for pupils. The school offers many clubs that add to pupils' enjoyment of school. Along with the well-planned provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, these contribute considerably to pupils' personal development. Good links with local schools also contribute to curriculum provision, for example through sporting links and the shared funding for additional activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school works in close partnership with outside agencies to support those pupils who need extra help with their learning. Procedures to promote pupils' health and well-being are good. There are good systems to help pupils who join the school partway through their education which help them to settle quickly. For example, a group of children for whom English is an additional language made a video of aspects of school life to help with the induction of new pupils. Those who are at an early stage of learning English when they join the school receive intensive support in small groups. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Marking of pupils' work varies widely in quality. Some marking, particularly in English, gives pupils clear guidance on how their work can be improved, but other marking does little more than acknowledge that the work has been done. Although pupils have individual targets, these are not used with sufficient rigour. In some classes the use of targets lapsed when school leaders were away and they have only recently been revived. Some pupils achieved the targets in their books some weeks ago but have yet to be given a new one. Marking rarely refers to pupils' targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Following recent interruptions to leadership and management, the headteacher and leadership team have accurately identified the priorities for school improvement. However, school improvement planning does not clearly show how the success of leaders' actions is to be measured, particularly in relation to raising achievement and standards. Consequently, the governing body, although supportive of the school's work, does not have a sharp enough focus for monitoring school improvement. Along with the headteacher, governors are overseeing a large but slow building programme. This includes a nearby children's centre that is already making good neighbourhood provision, especially for families new to the area, including those from Eastern Europe. It is part of the school's successful work to promote pupils' understanding and respect of communities both locally and internationally. An evaluation has helped the school to identify where this provision could be extended further. All this means that the

promotion of community cohesion is good. The school has good procedures for tracking pupils' progress. This enables appropriately challenging end-of-year targets to be set for pupils to work towards. Where underachievement is identified, additional support is provided that is helping pupils to catch up where they have previously fallen behind.

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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?	3
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?	3

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	3

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	3

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?	3

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**

22 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ellen Wilkinson Primary School, London, E6 5UP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. The school is giving you a satisfactory education. Staff take good care of you, and that is among the reasons why you feel happy and safe at school. Another reason is the way you all get on so well together. We were pleased to see how well behaved you are. You are taking a great pride in your school, and in the interesting things you get to learn, but we could see that some of you do not take enough pride in the presentation of your work. We would like to see you take a little more care in making your work neat and tidy. That will help you avoid making careless mistakes.

From the Nursery to the end of Year 6, teachers are helping you to make reasonable progress. Those of you who need extra help with your learning and the children who are new to learning English benefit from good support. That is really helping you to learn. When you all do the same work in lessons, it can often be too easy for some of you. This is something that we have asked your teachers to look at. We have also asked them to make sure that you are helped to get on quickly with your work so that you get a lot done, and to see that you all know exactly what you need to do to move your learning on. This is something you can help with, too. Always be sure to read and follow your teachers' advice when they mark your work and ask your teacher for a new target as soon as you have achieved the one in the front of your books.

Your headteacher, school leaders and governors know the school well and have a clear picture of what is needed to make the school even better. They have an annual plan that sets out the priorities for the year ahead. We have asked them to make that even more useful by including clear, measurable success criteria - much as you all have when the teachers set out the WILF (what I am looking for) objectives for your lessons. That will help them see how well they are doing in meeting the targets they set for improving the school.

Thank you all again for being so helpful to us, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector