

Discovery Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131109
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	328553
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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)	185
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 Steve James
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqueline Bradley (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Battery Road Thamesmead London SE28 0JN
Telephone number	020 8855 2470
Fax number	020 8855 2738

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is the school's first inspection. The school opened in temporary accommodation in September 2007 and then transferred to the purpose-built site in September 2008. The school is linked to the Discovery Children's Centre, although this is managed as a separate organisation. The school is set in an area of Thamesmead that is going through immense change. Almost all pupils come from the newly completed homes. The fast-growing community is culturally diverse. Half of all pupils speak English as an additional language. Most pupils come from Black African heritages. Other groups include those from Asian, mixed race, Turkish and Polish heritages. The proportion of White British pupils is small. Broadly half of the pupils receive free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Their needs largely relate to autistic spectrum disorders, medical, or speech and language difficulties.

Prior to the school being built, the headteacher, Mr Phil Smith, was appointed to work with local people to plan and open a new school, which embraces the needs of the community and provides pupils with the best educational opportunities. The sad and sudden death of the headteacher, shortly before the inspection in April 2009, was a great shock to the whole community. His deputy headteacher is now working as the acting headteacher while governors recruit a new headteacher for 2010.

The number of pupils attending the school is growing each year. At the moment, younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery, and the others are in the two Reception classes. There are two Year 1 classes and no older pupils yet on roll. Eventually, the school will take pupils through to the end of Year 6. Another local school is temporarily sharing part of the building, as their school was destroyed by fire.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Discovery is a good school, which has developed very quickly in the last two years and has a strong capacity to develop further in the future. Staff and governors are highly committed to doing the best for the pupils. The very impressive links with the community contribute a great deal to the success of the school. Relationships are excellent because pastoral care is outstanding. Parents have great confidence in the work of the school and greatly value the way that staff are always kind, supportive and approachable. Pupils are polite and respectful, while showing lively personalities. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils' enjoyment of school and their enthusiasm for learning contribute much to their good achievement.

Children often start school with standards below those expected nationally. They make good progress and standards are currently as expected overall by the end of Year 1. Pupils achieve well because teaching and the curriculum are good. Teachers know the pupils well and work very hard to make learning fun and meaningful. Staff place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking skills so that they confidently share their ideas. The needs of pupils from different backgrounds are well catered for and this means that pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as other groups. The school works successfully to ensure that pupils from the many different cultural backgrounds also do well.

Teachers ensure that pupils learn the important basic skills of reading and writing well. Pupils know the basics in mathematics and staff have clearly grasped the idea that mathematical activities must be meaningful and fun. Although pupils make steady progress in this subject, the most able pupils are not given enough opportunities to attempt challenging activities. Plans are in place to address this issue. The school also plans to widen pupils' use of and skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Currently, ICT is not used sufficiently to enrich and extend pupils' learning in a wide range of subjects.

Pupils' wider personal development is good. They make a positive contribution to the community and know how to be safe, healthy and fit. Pupils love the very good range of fitness activities. Their spiritual and cultural development is good; this encourages pupils to show respect for others and it promotes good racial harmony. Pupils develop self-esteem and enjoy all that the school provides.

The school's African motto of 'UBUNTU', which means, 'We are because of others', is central to the way that staff, governors, parents and pupils have worked together to get this new school up and running. During the inspection, everyone spoke very highly about the leadership of the late headteacher. They noted his superb vision, dedication and high expectations. His work lives on in the design of the learning environment and through his appointment of high-quality staff. He instigated the very good systems, procedures and policies that are securely in place. As a result, the school is running very smoothly and pupils are doing well. Leadership, especially by the deputy headteacher and governors, is good and together they are ensuring that the work and development of the school continues. As one parent put it, 'The staff have coped and supported the children through this difficult time, through amazing teamwork and strong leadership.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As a result of good leadership, children enjoy an exciting start to their education and they achieve well. Standards, by the end of Reception, are rising. In 2008, standards were below what was expected. The children currently in the Reception year group are working at the expected level in all six areas of learning. In particular, boys are doing much better than they have previously in learning to read and write.

Teaching is good and this leads to children learning new things quickly and enthusiastically. Children enjoy a good balance between teacher directed activities and those that they choose for themselves. Teachers make sure that children learn in fun and meaningful ways. There are many investigative and creative activities, which help them to learn about the world in which they live. For example, they learnt about nature, shapes and measuring when looking closely at small and giant snails. While doing this, they talked excitedly about the snails' movements and habitats. As a follow on, to increase their knowledge and skills, they made glitter spiral patterns and accurately measured the snails' trails very carefully with string and counting blocks. Within all activities, adults make sure that there is a strong emphasis on helping children to use longer sentences and new words. The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is effective. Children enjoy reading and writing for different purposes. Adults are working to integrate more of these aspects into children's play, investigations and creative activities, to make learning more meaningful and enjoyable. Children confidently work with others. They take turns, share and behave extremely well and, as result, their personal development is outstanding. Children's welfare is taken very seriously and the close working partnership with parents aids this. Teaching assistants effectively support children and relationships between all adults and children are excellent. Assessment procedures are used effectively to plan the next steps of children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils, especially the most able, are given consistently challenging work to do so that they make good progress in mathematics.
- Develop pupils' use of and skills in ICT across a wide range of subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From children's lower than expected starting points, they achieve well. By the end of Year 1, pupils' standards are at the expected level for their age in speaking, reading and writing and mathematics. The school has been working to make sure that all different groups of pupils do as well as each other and this is coming along well. Leaders have introduced interesting activities and resources to ensure that boys and girls do equally well. Overall, all groups make good progress. This includes those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, vulnerable pupils, and pupils from different cultural backgrounds. A good proportion of pupils reach high levels in reading and writing but, currently, no pupil is on track to reach the higher level skills in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils get on well with each other and this reflects the very calm and friendly attitudes of the staff. Pupils quickly develop good levels of confidence and self-esteem. They like the praise and encouragement given to them by the adults in the school. Pupils play and work well together in a friendly and caring way. Pupils said, 'We like the teachers and have lots of friends.' Pupils show a very well developed sense of right and wrong. They follow the school rules and encourage each other so their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils think about how others feel and they share their special thoughts in a sensitive way. They know simple facts about different religions, such as Christianity and Islam, and their knowledge is enhanced by visitors from various faiths. Pupils know about how to eat healthily and agreed that, 'You need fruits, vegetables and not much fat.' They also know about the importance of exercise and enjoy doing many physical activities. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed working with seven local schools on a recycling project and have recently worked with the community on a 'Family Day' to make a special memorial for their former headteacher. Pupils' good academic achievement, together with their social maturity, prepares them well for the future. However, they are not yet learning enough in ICT for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding and is good overall. Adults very successfully help pupils to widen their speaking skills and this helps them with all aspects of their development. For example, pupils who have language and communication difficulties used puppets and props effectively to help them accurately retell the story of 'The Train Ride'. Teachers help pupils to read and write regularly for many different purposes. The teaching of reading is organised in a rigorous way to ensure that pupils learn letters and sounds. This helps them to make good progress in learning to read and spell different words. Teachers provide activities that are both very interesting and allow pupils to learn in different ways. This is an outstanding feature of teachers' planning. Pupils loved making and selling tickets for the 'Olympics' and writing letters to the Olympic Committee about what sports they would like to do. These activities followed on from their research into the ancient Greek Olympics and, as part of this, pupils did many different sporting games that they invented themselves. Mathematics activities are often well planned for lower- and middle-ability groups. However, the most able pupils do not have enough opportunities to work together in small groups on tasks that extend their skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils are encouraged to contribute their ideas about what they would like to learn, while teachers also ensure that the full National Curriculum is covered. The curriculum is being organised well into creative topics that lead through from Year 1 to Year 6. Attention is given to ensure that topics are not repeated and skills build up year by year. Pupils particularly enjoy the additional visits and clubs designed to stimulate their interest and understanding of new things. They enjoy cookery, for example. Artists have worked with the pupils, their families and staff to create a beautiful mosaic for the outdoor learning environment. The curriculum is made

lively and relevant by the good use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. Pupils also have access to a small number of computers. However, progress in developing ICT has been hampered by a lack of resources; these are shortly to increase. The school does not have access to an ICT suite during the time that another local school is sharing the school building. The school has won the Healthy Lifestyle Award-Gold Level because they make sure that pupils are trying hard to eat healthily and be fit and active.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is excellent. This is a very respectful, supportive community, where pupils feel safe and very well cared for. The care for vulnerable pupils and those who have medical needs is especially impressive. The very high proportion of skilled support staff contributes considerable support to pupils. The specialist learning mentor works very closely with individuals, small groups and families to help them to overcome their particular problems. This work also enhances community cohesion. Teaching assistants work well with pupils for whom English is an additional language and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they make good progress. There are very strong links with a range of outside agencies such as speech therapists and the adjoining Children's Centre. The school does all it can to improve attendance.

Adults talk to pupils about how to improve their work, which enhances their progress. This is often done through sensitive individual discussions, but some adults are better than others at giving tips on how pupils might improve their work. The marking of work, in pupils' books, does not give enough guidance on how they might develop or improve their work next time. Pupils in Year 1 do not have a specific book in which to record their mathematics workings and ideas. This makes it difficult for pupils and teachers to see how skills are building up. For example, from the lessons seen, pupils' understanding and recording of tens and units is weak.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders clearly know the school's strengths and areas for development because their self-evaluation is good. Staff and governors work very closely as a team. They are dedicated to the development of the school and the promotion of community cohesion. Staff work well with adults so that they learn new skills for future employment and they make sure that the school works closely with the Children's Centre to promote links with parents from all cultural and faith backgrounds. The school encourages parents and carers to come into school and work together. The curriculum places a good emphasis on helping pupils to learn about different British lives, areas and traditions in addition to ensuring that pupils know about African traditions, music, art and more global and European events. Staff work hard to raise the aspirations of all. Leaders make sure that pupils receive high-quality care, have equal opportunities and achieve well. Leaders regularly review the school's improvement plans and have set suitably challenging targets to raise standards. However, targets for the most able pupils in mathematics are too low.

The deputy headteacher has quickly risen to the responsibilities of being acting headteacher. Middle managers give her good support and are developing their roles. Since the school opened, leaders have written many policies and are effectively developing the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum. Leaders have a good understanding about the standards

reached in different subjects and they know broadly about the overall progress made by pupils. However, they are still sharpening their skills in evaluating the progress made by different groups of pupils. Some middle managers are not yet involved enough in checking the quality of teaching in the subjects that they are responsible for, as senior staff have mostly done this to date. The evaluation of data is improving and is greatly aided by effective support from the administrative staff.

Governors have made a significant contribution to the development of the school. They are very well led by a knowledgeable chair and, together, they ask perceptive and challenging questions and take firm action to improve this new school.

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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	NA
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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
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?	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	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	1
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?	2
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?	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	3
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?	2
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**

02 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Discovery Primary School, London, SE28 0JN

You may remember that two school inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

You go to a good school, which is great news. This means that all of the teachers and other grown-ups are trying really hard to make things just right for you.

These are the things that are especially good.

- You like going to school and we agree with you that it is a happy place to be
- You are looked after amazingly well. This is outstanding.
- You are very friendly, behave extremely well and are kind and thoughtful to others. We were impressed by your 'Family Day', which will always remind you of the special things that Mr Smith did for you and your school.
- The grown-ups work closely with your families and others to make sure that you are happy at school and can do well.
- You are helped to learn new things quickly and you work hard. This helps you to learn how to read, write and talk about your work well.
- We love the way that your teachers make learning fun for you. We were impressed by your exciting work on snails and the Olympics.
- Congratulations for eating healthy foods and doing sports to keep you fit.
- Well done for helping others in school, in Thamesmead and, in places further away. It was fantastic to hear how you have worked with seven other schools on a recycling project and we hope that you have plenty of fun at the carnival.
- We liked your artwork, especially the mosaic.

The adults, especially Jacqui (your deputy headteacher), are all working hard to keep improving things for you. I have asked them all to do the following things to make your school even better.

- Make sure that some of you, who find maths easy, do some harder counting, measuring and thinking.
- Give you more computer activities to help you with your learning.

Have fun in the last few weeks at school and then enjoy your summer holidays!

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector