

London Fields Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100230
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	330275
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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)	350
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	35
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	Interim executive
Chair	Mr Peter Passam board
Principal	Mr Greg Wallace, Executive Principal
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Westgate Street London E8 3RL
Telephone number	020 7254 4330
Fax number	020 7249 2824

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. At the previous inspection in March 2007, the school was placed in special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Inspectors subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and re-inspected the school in December 2008.

Description of the school

This is a large school where pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds, the largest groups being of Bangladeshi, African or Caribbean heritage. Other pupils come from a broad range of backgrounds and include a significant number from families of Turkish heritage. The proportion of pupils in the early stages of learning English is much larger than in most schools. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at different times is high. Around one in four of the pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities which is higher than in most schools. The school makes full-time and part-time provision for younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in a Nursery. Older children in the EYFS are provided for in two Reception classes. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff over recent years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

When the school was placed in special measures the key areas for improvement were to:

- improve the teaching to raise standards in English, mathematics and science, and ensure that pupils of all abilities achieve as well as they can
- improve the curriculum, teaching and care provided for children in the Foundation Stage
- improve behaviour to ensure that all pupils enjoy school and are safe from harm or harassment
- improve the quality of leadership at all levels by establishing clear priorities for improvement that take account of the views of pupils and parents.

There has been transformational progress in all these areas. The school now provides its pupils with a good and improving education. Unlike at the time of the last inspection, the school has for some time now felt safe and an enjoyable place to be for pupils and staff. Standards are still very low but, since September 2008, the progress of many pupils has been rapid. Overall, given their starting points, pupils are now making good progress.

Since September 2008, the school has been operating in close partnership with a highly successful primary school. Many leaders and experienced teachers, including the new executive principal, head of school, deputy and an assistant head have transferred to the school and brought with them effective systems based on best practice. This systematic approach to teaching and learning is still being embedded, but there is already clear evidence of impact and accelerated progress by pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved greatly. This is the result of the hard work and passion of leaders and staff at all levels coupled with the positive response of pupils. One pupil represented learners' enjoyment of school when she told an inspector that, 'Learning is fun.'

One reason for pupils' improved progress is that they are well cared for and supported in a caring environment. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and feel they are able to achieve well. The conditions now exist for them to do so. The school uses its resources well and provides good value for money through for example, the highly effective use of some teaching assistants.

Despite some unevenness in the quality of teaching, all major aspects of the school's work are good. The school's arrangements for ensuring safety and managing risks are outstanding and the current leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are excellent. Teaching is far more consistent than was previously the case. The quality of teaching is now good overall. No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection and most was at least good. Experienced staff deliver consistently good or outstanding teaching while newly qualified teachers are improving rapidly. However, because of the legacy of poor teaching and other inadequacies, standards remain far too low. Also good are pupils' personal development and well-being. The school has a strong focus on developing pupils' future economic well-being both by raising standards and by learning about the adult and financial world.

Given the recent history of changes in staffing and leadership, inspectors carefully investigated the stability of current structures and possible succession planning. Meetings were held with key stakeholders from the learning trust and the interim executive board. Evidence shows clearly that through federation with Woodberry Down Primary School, the impact of which is

already apparent in London Field's recent rapid improvements, the school's capacity for further improvement is very secure.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the EYFS. They enter the Nursery class with levels of knowledge and skills that are very low for their age, particularly in linking sounds to letters. High numbers of children in the Reception classes have not attended Nursery. The school manages this and the varied needs of children well. This is evident in individual children's records and the way in which the curriculum is being adapted to meet their needs. Increased opportunities for imaginative play, linked to the various areas of learning, result in children engaging in a wide variety of speaking and listening activities. Themed texts such as 'The Emperor's New Coat' are used effectively to ensure that the areas of learning are well linked and this results in children learning in relevant and meaningful ways. Children learn in a safe and secure environment because of the staff's caring and positive approaches towards the children. Excellent assessment systems feed into planning and result in challenging work. Consequently, children achieve well within a wide range of needs. They include high numbers of children who are just acquiring English as a second language, who have learning difficulties and disabilities, or who start school at different times during the year.

Leaders and managers have a very clear awareness of strengths and areas needing development, and provide excellent coaching and support for less experienced members of staff. This, alongside the recently introduced systematic programmes to raise standards in communication, language and literacy and in problem solving, reasoning and number, is having an extremely positive impact on teaching and learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on existing good practice ensuring that all pupils receive consistently good teaching, so they achieve their full potential and reach expected standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although standards are still very low, the rate of pupils' progress has increased enormously as a result of new systems of teaching literacy, numeracy and scientific investigations. These are coupled with a rigorous assessment regime, which enables pupils' progress towards their very challenging targets to be monitored carefully and supported as necessary. Results in the 2008 National Curriculum tests were lower than in previous years because of past underachievement. Nonetheless, the progress that this represented was good, as shown by the measure of added value. Boys had performed less well than girls in previous years, but current data show that this imbalance is levelling out. The rate of increased progress has been considerable over a short time, although some lower attaining pupils are making slower progress because of the size of gap in their previous learning. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils have undergone a crash course in phonics to help them work on the same system of improving writing as their classmates. Pupils from different backgrounds achieve at broadly similar rates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are very positive about their experience in school and say that, 'Sometimes teachers are fun.' Pupils are encouraged to explore the values and religious beliefs of others, and to understand their own feelings. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils generally get on well with each other, although a few do comment that their partners in lessons are not always friendly. Behaviour is good. A striking feature is pupils' good natured relationships shown in playtime activities, especially by their exuberance in the 'king ball' game. Stickers achieved are proudly shown on jumpers; not least the weekly stickers with a specific behaviour focus.

The attendance rate is still below the national figure but current initiatives are producing positive results. Pupils make excellent progress in learning about keeping safe, and know what it is to be a good citizen. They feel very safe and say that, 'Our teacher is always smiling and helps us when we have a problem.' They know how to keep healthy and enjoy gymnastics because, 'We get into shape.'

School Council members enjoy the job. Skills needed for dealing with experiences beyond school life grow as pupils take on responsibilities such as being library monitors, office juniors or playground friends, a job for which they had to apply, and be interviewed and trained. Through good opportunities provided, pupils gain a good understanding of the responsibility of organising personal finance, improving their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most teaching and learning are good. Teachers receive systematic training, coaching and good feedback. This has resulted in improved subject knowledge, consistency and confidence. Increased opportunities for pupils to share, discuss and reflect on their work result in greater engagement and a faster pace to learning. Excellent marking provides very useful feedback to pupils and this has a positive impact on learning. Teaching assistants generally make a good contribution to learning. Specific training and monitoring are being provided to extend their role even further. Examples of very effective work involving small groups of pupils were seen.

Relationships are good because teachers are enthusiastic and provide consistent and positive feedback to the pupils. As a result, behaviour is good and pupils show good attitudes to their work. Stimulating and helpful learning environments also help to build up pupils' learning well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The new curriculum is closely linked to the new approach to teaching and learning. Part of the reason for the consistency in approach to teaching and learning across the school is because of the implementation of a model that has proved highly successful in other schools. Whilst standards in literacy and numeracy are very low, the school has avoided the trap of neglecting the wider curriculum. Exciting lessons were observed in design and technology and in history for example. In both these lessons, the teacher's secure subject knowledge enabled imaginative approaches to the lesson to be planned. For example, in the design lesson the teacher took

the role of 'the boss' and the pupils were her well-motivated design team. They enjoyed this greatly and learning was brought alive. Similarly, Year 1 pupils demonstrated a good understanding of Roman clothing when extracting clothes from different periods from a sack, building on their recent museum visit. These examples illustrate the way that learning is brought to life across a broad curriculum that effectively meets the needs and context of the pupils.

The curriculum is further enhanced through a range of extended school activities. There is a lot of opportunity for sport and a specialist teaches some physical education lessons. Some pupils attend a local secondary school for 'Saturday school.' Black History Month has provided useful contexts for pupils to learn about important people in history, often relevant to their own backgrounds. There is improved provision to broaden pupils' cultural understanding. For example French is now a weekly lesson and the International Primary Curriculum has been adapted for Year 1.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's good pastoral care contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and safety in school. Pupils are made to feel increasingly secure in school. Attendance figures remain below average and, while absences are stringently monitored and followed up, there is not enough sense of urgency in making home contacts. Pupils with emotional and behavioural needs and with learning difficulties are well supported by teachers, the school's counsellor and therapist. Vulnerable pupils are sensitively supported through the good links the school has with the 'cluster' social worker and specialist agencies. Rigorous attention is given to risk assessment and excellent procedures for safeguarding pupils are clear, up-to-date and firmly in place.

Academic guidance procedures are strong. Pupils know what level they are reaching in their work because all have individual education plans that are reviewed half yearly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers at all levels have been very successful in ensuring consistency in the ways in which teachers manage pupils' behaviour, track their progress and plan to meet their needs. This is having a clear impact on pupils' achievement as shown by the data from regular testing this term, demonstrating the good capacity to make further improvements. Coordinators of core subjects have monitored teaching and rigorously scrutinised pupils' work. The impact of this is evident in the effective marking in pupils' books. Pupils respond in green ink, developing their learning and enhancing their progress. New curricula for the systematic teaching of English and mathematics mean that pupils who had missed out on basic learning when younger are now catching up rapidly, though the progress of some lower attainers is proving slower to take off. Governors have been influential in setting up the federation with another Hackney school and this has been key to the accelerating rate of school improvement, steered by effective self-evaluation. Governors are increasing their monitoring the school's work at first hand. The good and harmonious relationships between pupils from different backgrounds is evidence that the school contributes well to community cohesion.

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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?	2
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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	1
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	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	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?	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**

19 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of London Fields Primary School, London, E8 3RL

I am writing to thank you for the welcome you gave me and the team of inspectors when we visited your school on the 9–10 December 2008, and on our previous visits over the last year and a half. We really appreciated the help you gave us, especially in sharing your work and your ideas about the school.

You probably know that for some time inspectors wanted your school to have special help and so your school was in 'special measures.' I am delighted to tell you that as a result of the hard work of you and your teachers, we were able to see that your school has got a lot better and it no longer needs 'special measures.'

You attend a good school that is getting better all the time. You told us that one of the best things about your school is that it is 'fun.' Most of the time your behaviour is very good and we saw different groups of pupils getting on really well at break time. Your teachers are helping you to learn quickly. We saw a lot of interesting and exciting lessons. You learn a lot of interesting things that will be helpful to you as you grow older. In your books we could see that marking is very helpful to you.

We found that the school looks after you all very well. You told us that you feel safe and really enjoy coming to school. Your teachers know you well and have a lot of information on how well you are doing. The school is using that information to help you do even better. There are a lot of extra things for you to do outside of lessons, such as clubs and sport.

This is what we have asked the school to do to make it even better.

- Make sure that you all receive the best teaching so that you are able to do better and produce work that is as good as it possibly can be.

Yours faithfully

Adrian Lyons

Her Majesty's Inspector