

Houndsfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102011
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	330300
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Carmen Rodney 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)	459
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	57
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Green
Headteacher	Miss Valerie Fitt
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ripon Road London N9 7RE
Telephone number	020 8804 4938
Fax number	020 8804 4939

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Houndsfield Primary is larger than the average primary school. Very high proportions of the pupils join or leave the school during the academic year. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with 54% at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school provides a nurture class for a small group of ten pupils in Key Stage 1. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision on site. The school has a Speech and Language Resource Base, which caters for children within Enfield schools; historically there has been limited interaction between the school and the Base. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and or/disabilities is well above average and the numbers of pupils who have a formal statement of special educational need is in line with the national average. The school is part of the School Sport Partnership and works closely with a local school, St Ignatius Secondary School.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was placed in special measures. Since February 2007, the school has experienced significant staff mobility including two interim headteachers. In response to being in a category of concern, the school formally became part of a federation with Churchfield Primary School in September 2008. The federation drives the work of both schools, which share an executive headteacher and the same governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

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. Nevertheless, in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.

The school has improved considerably under the recently appointed and experienced senior team and middle managers and shows good capacity to improve. The federation of Churchfield and Houndsfield Schools is a productive union. This is making a significant contribution to the staff at Houndsfield School emerging from troubled times and having a clear vision for school improvement. The federation, forged at different levels since the summer term 2008, has established a firm foundation for the school's accelerating improvement.

The executive headteacher and headteacher have accurately identified a clear picture of the school and have begun to set a well thought through direction for its improvement. For example, the re-structured management team has used its expertise very well to begin re-building a previously fragile school. The transformation agenda is focused on ensuring that there is emphasis on learning linked to the rigorous use of assessment information. The school has therefore adopted the motto, 'journey to success' as a means of reinforcing the renewed focus on raising standards. These actions, though recent, are impacting on pupils' progress with the senior and middle leaders working as a cohesive team to ensure that initiatives are consistently implemented and monitored. Consequently, accountability has improved significantly and staff are increasingly aware of the next steps needed to raise standards further.

School improvement planning is now more focused and the newly formed, but experienced, federated governing body has begun to map out the direction for holding the school to account. For example, models of good practice, such as performance review from Churchfield School are being adapted for the school. Significant changes have been made to the school's environment but actions to agree a recovery plan and to complete the refurbishment have yet to be agreed between the governors and local authority.

The message about the school's improvement comes across strongly from a small but representative sample of parents who gave evidence during the inspection. They spoke very positively about the recent changes for the better. Parents commented on the visibility of staff, the increased homework, and the move to solve issues around behaviour and meeting the dietary requirements of different cultural and religious groups. Senior leaders recognise the learning needs of different minority ethnic groups and have started to establish good partnership work with parents. For example, Somali parents have responded by attending workshops on the curriculum and learning.

By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are exceptionally low in national tests and achievement is unsatisfactory. Over the last five years, standards have not risen significantly and the slow rate of progress has resulted in pupils not acquiring a sound grasp of the basic skills necessary to prepare them for future learning. Previously, pupils have failed to make at least satisfactory progress because expectations of what they can achieve have not been high enough. Current initiatives to tackle underachievement are beginning to raise aspirations and accelerate progress.

Most children in the EYFS experience a satisfactory start to their education and make sound progress in beginning to learn basic skills.

The quality of teaching has improved and is now satisfactory overall. Pupils describe lessons as 'fun' and, as one commented, 'if you get something wrong, the teachers give you a chance'. Under the new leadership team, the quality of teaching has improved within a very short time because of the emphasis on structured planning and the rigorous approach to monitoring, as well as using assessment information on pupils' progress to identify and correct any shortfalls in expectations.

The school has impressed on pupils the need to develop a good work ethic and as a result, their personal development and well-being are satisfactory with particular strengths in their behaviour and attitudes to learning and in their spiritual, moral social and cultural development. This is because there are now good systems that are contributing to increasing pupils' self-esteem and independence. Pupils report that they like the major changes under the new leadership team, as they 'feel a lot safer now'. One pupil, who said, 'I have been to three schools so far, this is the best', sums up the strong evidence of some marked improvement in provision. The curriculum meets requirements and there are plans to extend it further. Pupils have access to a good range of extra curricular activities. The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Robust procedures are now used to set pupils individual targets, which is increasing their understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision is satisfactory and is enabling children to make satisfactory progress. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because of the good staffing levels and a strong focus on helping children to follow routines, develop independence and good relationships. Staff ensure that children are safe and happy, take exercise and eat and drink healthily.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and are stronger in the Reception than in the Nursery, where planning lacks detail and best use is not always made of the available staff, space and resources to maximise learning. In Reception, small-group and whole-class teaching of the basic skills, including phonics, is good, well focused and inclusive. Teachers use questioning effectively and provide a lot of repetition to reinforce children's learning and develop their speaking and listening skills.

Throughout the EYFS there is a satisfactory balance of indoor and outdoor activities led by adults as well as learning opportunities that children choose for themselves. When children work independently, adults usually interact meaningfully with them to move their learning on.

The new EYFS leader, with help from senior leaders and external advice and support, is making positive improvements to the provision. She knows what needs to be done to help raise standards further, including ensuring that the induction process into the Nursery is improved and carried out more swiftly, so that children are in school and start learning as soon as possible.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of attainment in all year groups by focusing particularly on skills in English, mathematics and science.

- Develop consistently good teaching practice so that there is a sharper focus on improving pupils' learning and identifying and filling in gaps in their learning in order to accelerate progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Attainment on entry is low and the rate of progress and standards reached at the end of each key stage is significantly below average. Results improved slightly in 2008 but too many pupils are not achieving the standard expected at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Additionally, too few of the more able pupils are reaching the higher levels. Standards have been consistently well below average for the last five years. Progress has been inadequate from Year 1 onwards because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in the past and the lack of robust monitoring procedures, which have affected many pupils' progress, particularly among pupils from White British heritages, White Eastern European, Somali and White Greek Cypriot backgrounds. The high level of mobility affects pupils' progress but this has yet to be analysed in detail. Like their peers, pupils with learning difficulties and or/disabilities do not make adequate progress.

Analysis of the 2008 results and teachers' assessment information show an improving trend from very low starting points and a move towards accelerating pupils' progress. The rate of progress is most marked in Year 3; nevertheless, weaknesses are evident in pupils' writing and in their use of problem solving in mathematics. The school has taken appropriate steps to improve the low standards of the pupils' basic skills with a programme of training, improvement planning and initiatives such as booster classes and curriculum changes in order to develop the depth of pupils' work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils behave well in the school. They respect basic routines such as putting their hands up to speak in class, work well together and move sensibly around the school. Pupils themselves say that behaviour has become much better in recent months, and their positive attitudes are reflected in a more consistent approach to presenting and organising their work. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well with one another and in discussions; they were quick to point this out and said that they felt safe in the school. Attendance so far this term is below the national average, but this is mainly because of lower attendance in the first two weeks of term and during Eid. In recent weeks, it has been good. Pupils have an appropriate range of opportunities to take responsibility within the school, acting as class monitors and helping younger pupils with their reading in book week. The good range of sports and lunchtime activities makes a good contribution to healthy living. The school recognises that the canteen menu needs to be reviewed. Pupils are now enjoying their lessons more and as an example point to the way teachers use more questions and discussion to help them learn. However, many pupils still have significant gaps in their skills and knowledge, and this limits the extent to which they can become confident, independent learners, preparing them for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. The school is making good use of the federation to promote consistency in teaching across classes. Relative strengths across the school include teachers' planning, classroom organisation, behaviour management and use of interactive whiteboards. Therefore, lessons are purposeful, teaching is becoming more consistent and pupils' learning is improving.

Inspection evidence and the school's own monitoring show there is some good teaching in lessons in each key stage, though not yet enough to raise standards quickly. Where lessons are particularly effective, teachers adopt a brisk pace, support learning well and modify their plans throughout the lesson to meet the emerging needs of learners and address any misunderstandings or gaps in learning.

The recent focus on ensuring that learning objectives and success criteria are routinely discussed with pupils is a positive one. However, these are not always phrased in child-friendly language that would ensure pupils understand what they are expected to learn.

Training has been very successful in helping the support staff to have a better impact on pupils' learning, including those who have learning difficulties or are new to learning English. Improved assessments mean that class teachers also have a better picture of pupils' progress and performance. Marking, though not yet consistent across all classes, has improved since the last monitoring visit and generally provides encouragement and feedback about how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has made significant changes to the curriculum in the last academic year with many of these only in place since September 2008. This has ensured that pupils receive an acceptable education, which fully covers all the expected areas, and fills in some of the gaps that had been identified previously. There is evidence that the recent changes are already bringing about improvement. For example, in science lessons, pupils are now carrying out more investigations and enjoy their work more. In literacy lessons, there is a better match between the specific skills, which are taught, and the topics which children read and write about in their work. Nevertheless, with so much that is new, it is too early to see significant impact on pupils' overall standards and achievement. The school is aware that a lot more needs to be done to adapt the curriculum to the particular interests of the pupils, and to make more links between subjects. This is clearly identified in the written improvement plans. There is a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities, which pupils fully appreciate. Due attention is given to increasing pupils' understanding of living in a multi-racial community with plans to develop community cohesion further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's approach to setting higher expectations, being firm but fair when children overstep the mark, the emphasis on 'golden rules' and the use of positive rewards, have all played a part in the significant improvement in pupils' behaviour. Similarly, the better attendance results

from measures such as highlighting attendance in assemblies and working more closely with parents. Since the start of September 2008, the school has begun to use good procedures for reviewing and identifying the pupils needing additional help with their learning or with learning English as an additional language, so that support is better matched to pupils' needs. Reliable performance data on pupils learning is now available and provides a sound foundation for improving learning. It is used to track pupils' progress and match work more closely to their needs. Pupils have recently been re-assessed and given individual targets and the majority understand these well. However, as with several other areas of the school, much has been put in place to support and guide pupils, but it is too soon to judge the impact on their longer-term progress. The school meets government guidelines with regard to vetting staff and safeguarding children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is well led by an experienced team with a track record of managing challenging schools. The leadership team understands the problems around attainment and is sharply focused at senior level on 'narrowing the gaps' among different minority ethnic groups with exceptionally low standards. At all levels, the management team has adopted a rigorous approach to monitoring teaching and learning, identifying strengths and weaknesses and using targeted support to ensure greater consistency and emphasis on learning. The executive headteacher and headteacher actively seek out and consider new initiatives for the federation so that they can be used for the benefit of the pupils. This approach is helping teachers to embrace change and recognise that Houndsfield Primary is now driving improvement.

Targets for raising standards are realistically challenging and are constantly reviewed based on the accelerated progress pupils are now making. Senior leaders and the governors are aware that there is much more to do but they have successfully enlisted the loyalty and support of staff by steering their thinking and approach to improving the provision. Teachers have therefore bought into the vision of success for all and are responding well to the increased accountability. All staff now involved in the school have a shared commitment to developing the school further.

Funding to support pupils at the early stage of learning English and the range of support available have yet to be increased.

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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?	4
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?	3
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?	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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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	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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Houndsfield Primary School, London, N9 7RE

Thank you very much for the part you played in the inspection of your school. A number of you reminded some of the inspectors about the visits to your lessons on other inspection visits to your school.

We have visited your school over the last 18 months because most of you were not making a lot of progress in your work. During those visits, we monitored how well you were learning and we feel that you are now beginning to do so much better. Because of this, we decided to remove your school from the special measures category into another category called a notice to improve. Houndsfield has really made many improvements but it still has more work to do to make sure that you are all making good progress. An inspector will be making one more visit to your school next year to find out if you are still making better progress in your work.

This inspection came up with a number of positive findings. Houndsfield is a much happier place and we agree with you and your parents that you feel safe and enjoy coming to school. The new headteacher and staff have taken effective action to improve behaviour and it is now good. This has made a big difference to most of you becoming more confident and developing good attitudes to learning. Lessons have also improved. You described them as 'fun'. You are now doing interesting work and taking part in a good range of sports activities, including football, gym, netball and cross-country running.

The school has achieved so much in a short time since it joined with Churchfield School to help you make better progress. Both schools are working together very well and the senior headteacher, your headteacher and all staff are very determined that you will all do even better.

There is still more work to do. We know that most of you need to understand the basic skills of speaking, reading, writing and numbers better and we have asked the staff to help develop these skills so that you can use them in every lesson and later on when you leave the school. We have also asked the teachers to focus on the things that help you to learn very quickly so that there are fewer or no mistakes in your work.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney

Her Majesty's Inspector