

James Dixon Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101631
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	331208
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheena MacDonald 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)	318
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	52
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Len Blomstrand
Headteacher	Mr Michael Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	William Booth Road Anerley London SE20 8BW
Telephone number	020 8778 6101
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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. When James Dixon Primary School was inspected in April 2008, it was judged to require special measures.

Description of the school

James Dixon is a larger than average primary school with additional provision for 18 pupils with complex learning needs, mainly autistic-spectrum disorders and behavioural, emotional and social needs. As a result, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those with a statement of special educational need, is well above the national average. The school provides for younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a part-time Nursery and in two Reception classes. Just under a third of the pupils are White British with two-thirds coming from a wide range of other ethnic groups, mainly Black Caribbean and Black African. A much higher than average number of pupils are learning English as an additional language, a relatively high proportion of whom are at the early stages. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average, as is the proportion who join the school other than at the beginning of Reception or Nursery or who leave before the end of Year 6.

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.

James Dixon is a good school. Pupils and adults enjoy learning together and success is breeding success as everyone begins to realise just how high they can aspire. Pupils told inspectors that 'sometimes we surprise ourselves with how much we learn!' This represents a remarkable turnaround since the last inspection and is due to the exceptional leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team. Their clear vision, high aspirations and imaginative 'hands on' approach have galvanised the school community so that there has been rapid improvement on all fronts. Staff and pupils are fully involved and motivated so that everyone believes, quite rightly, that they are valued and able to contribute to the forward momentum.

At the heart of the success is the value placed on ensuring that the needs, interests and abilities of each individual are identified and exceptionally well provided for. The school makes excellent use of internal and external partnerships to ensure that pupils are very well cared for and make good progress socially, emotionally and academically. Systems for gathering and using information about pupils' achievements are comprehensive and practical. Information is carefully analysed, challenging targets are set and well used by staff and pupils, and there is a sharp focus on improving learning.

As a result, attainment is rising rapidly and the good quality of presentation in the pupils' books shows that they are taking increasing pride in their achievements. From starting points which, for many pupils, were well below average when they arrived in the school, most are now achieving at the level of national expectations. This represents good progress overall. Progress in English has been outstanding during the past year, and in mathematics and science it is rapidly increasing as the focus for improvement moves onto those subjects. An emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills and on improving reading ability is successfully removing barriers to further progress.

The key to rising standards can be seen in the improving quality of teaching and learning, which are now good. Rigorous monitoring followed up quickly by intensive coaching has resulted in interesting, well-planned lessons where the learning objectives are clear and pupils' varying abilities well catered for. There are good opportunities for pupils to work together and discuss their learning. Sometimes, and in some subjects, the teachers' own subject knowledge or understanding of the steps for learning is not secure. When this is so, it limits the teachers' use of questioning and also undermines their confidence in enabling pupils to use their own initiative and extend their own learning independently. Marking is consistently good and there are some excellent examples where pupils respond to teachers' comments and where they are involved in self-assessment and review. This practice is not consistent across the school and is better in English than in other subjects. The curriculum is good and is adapted well to meet the varying needs and interests of pupils. This includes very good attention to ensuring that the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language are well met.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school, are enthusiastic learners, get on well together and appreciate the rich diversity of their school community. Behaviour has improved and is now good. Attendance was very low and has improved rapidly so that it is now satisfactory.

The rapid improvement across all aspects of school life in a relatively short time indicates that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve still further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children learn happily together in the Nursery and Reception classes and make satisfactory progress across all areas of learning. Children's personal development and well-being are good, as are the arrangements to ensure their welfare. The good level of care and support and a strong emphasis on children's emotional development and well-being has a positive impact on their behaviour, confidence and self-esteem. Home-school visits help children settle into school and ensure positive partnerships with parents. The large number of new entrants to Reception in January is testament to the increasing popularity of the school. However, the resulting changes to class structure and staffing are taking a little time to bed down. Learning and development are satisfactory. Adults work well together to provide interesting activities. There are some good examples of adult questioning which involve children in developing their speaking and listening skills and extend their learning. However, in some sessions, there is too much teacher talk and limited opportunities to be actively involved in learning. The indoor learning spaces are well organised with a good range of activities. Although opportunities to enjoy learning outdoors have improved, these areas are not yet fully developed. There are good systems for gathering information about children's achievements but these are relatively recent and not yet used systematically enough to identify trends or to plan strategies to address specific weaknesses. Leadership and management are providing good direction and ongoing support to a relatively inexperienced but committed and very enthusiastic staff team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the Early Years Foundation Stage assessment information more systematically to identify areas for improvement and plan activities which will help the children make faster progress.
- Develop teachers' subject knowledge and improve their use of questioning skills to extend pupils' learning.
- Build on the examples of outstanding practice to involve pupils in self-assessment, understanding and involvement in their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Less than two years ago, standards and progress were exceptionally low. During the past year, attainment has risen rapidly so that most pupils across all classes are now reaching levels of attainment which are at national expectations. The rate of progress pupils have made over this past year is outstanding. As a result, they have made up much of the lost ground, and overall progress is good.

Comprehensive and practical assessment systems are being used very effectively so that the school now has a very good understanding of what pupils are achieving, and what needs to be done to ensure that they make further progress. Careful tracking is used well to identify which pupils require 'catch up' or enrichment work. Well-planned group and individual work is enabling all pupils, including those with English as an additional language and the very high number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, have good attitudes to learning and mix well together regardless of age or background. Behaviour is good, particularly in lessons. Strategies, such as the greater involvement of lunchtime staff in leading activities, have resulted in improving behaviour outside as well. The rate of exclusions has been dramatically reduced and is now low. Pupils have a good knowledge of healthy and safe lifestyles. The recently introduced salad bar is popular and physical education clubs and activities are well attended. Rising attainment in the basic skills is giving pupils a good foundation for their future lives. They are developing self-confidence and willingly take advantage of increasing opportunities to work together and contribute their ideas. Pupils develop an appreciation of the diverse range of cultures and needs within the school community. They make a good contribution to the community and speak animatedly about the various activities they have been involved in, for instance, researching charities and making the decision to support Water Aid. They are proud of their responsibilities, for example as school council members and 'play pals', and would welcome more such opportunities. Their involvement in gardening and in designing a 'green garden' have also enhanced their learning and awareness of eco-systems.

Rigorous monitoring, close liaison with parents and external agencies and regular opportunities to promote and celebrate good attendance have resulted in great improvement. Attendance is now satisfactory and the number of pupils with persistently poor attendance has been halved. Most pupils come to school every day, eager to learn and to enjoy each other's company.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have both improved considerably over the past year because of the sharp focus on establishing what good learning is like. Teachers have become adept at clarifying their expectations about learning and behaviour. Pupils' speaking and listening skills benefit considerably from discussing ideas with their 'talk partners', rehearsing their answers and then sharing them with the rest of the class. Learning is broken down into smaller steps, which helps to generate pace and regularly focuses the pupils on the purpose of each lesson. The classrooms are stimulating places in which to learn, with relevant vocabulary and other visual prompts prominently displayed. These strategies help all pupils, and particularly those who are at the early stages of learning English. Well-trained teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution to the learning. Sometimes a lack of in-depth understanding of the steps for learning is reflected in adults' limited use of questioning to extend and focus pupils' understanding and restricted opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and independence in lessons. Marking of pupils' work is consistently good, with useful links to learning objectives and pupils' targets. There are some examples of outstanding practice where pupils are given time to reflect on their achievements, respond and improve their work. This practice is at an early stage of development and is hence inconsistent across classes and subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

By keeping the curriculum constantly under review, the senior leadership team is able to use it as a vehicle for raising achievement and increasing pupils' enjoyment of school. Standards in the core subjects have improved rapidly because of an emphasis on literacy and numeracy, although this has led to less time for other areas. Teachers compensate for this by linking the learning across subjects such as English and history and by using real-life events to stimulate learning. There is good provision for the arts and physical education and this is reflected in the vibrant artwork and the sounds of music which are positive features of the school. An emphasis on promoting the skills of enquiry, problem solving and the use of new technology means that pupils are being well equipped to meet the school's aim of being 'lifelong learners'. Programmes are carefully adapted to meet the wide range of individual needs so that all pupils are well provided for. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is less well developed. Events such as 'Diversity Week', where many parents spent time in school sharing food, stories and customs, are much valued by pupils and adults alike. They learn a great deal about the world and their own locality, and develop a good understanding of the school's rich cultural heritage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school knows its pupils and their families very well indeed. Arrangements for induction to the Nursery and Reception classes ensure that links with parents are strong from the start. The school works very effectively with a wide range of external partners to ensure excellent care and pastoral support for pupils. This is particularly evident in relation to addressing the needs of pupils with complex and additional learning and social needs. Exceptionally rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress and well-being is used well to target relevant and challenging support for individuals and groups. Pupils make rapid progress socially, emotionally and academically as a result of the close attention to meeting their needs. Academic guidance is increasingly good. Suitable and challenging targets are set for pupils. Pupils are aware of their targets and of how well they are progressing towards them through careful guidance and support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

During this inspection, many people commended the exceptional talents of the headteacher and the senior leadership team. As a result of their drive and their excellent understanding of what makes a school successful and how to motivate and inspire people, they have transformed the school in a remarkably short time. Their impressive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses derives from exceptionally thorough and imaginative monitoring, coaching and role modelling so that everyone is clear about what needs to be done and how to do it well. Their 'developmental, not judgemental' approach has raised morale, sharpened the focus on learning and enabled staff and pupils to contribute to school improvement. The school has set challenging improvement targets for pupils and staff which everyone understands and is sharply focused on ensuring that they achieve. Subject leaders are rapidly increasing their effectiveness and having a positive impact on improvements. Improvement planning is sharp and well focused, with measurable goals and milestones. The governing body is now active and

well informed and has an effective committee structure. Their involvement and effectiveness in school self-evaluation is less well developed. A positive emphasis on celebrating and understanding cultural diversity and strong links with the local area and the wider world, allied to increasingly good relationships with external partners such as the adjoining children's centre, mean that the school makes a good contribution 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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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?	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	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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	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**

09 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of James Dixon Primary School, London, SE20 8BW

As you know, I visited your school recently with two other inspectors to find out how well you were doing. Thank you for being so friendly, polite and welcoming, especially those of you who gave up your playtime to talk to us. When your school was inspected last April, it was not doing as well as it should have done. I visited your school last term and saw then that things were getting much better. I am delighted to tell you that this time your school is doing so well that it is now a good school. Well done, everyone!

Things have improved very quickly indeed and this is because your headteacher and the other senior leaders are doing an excellent job. They are very good at seeing what needs to be done, getting everyone to agree and then working really closely with everyone to make sure things improve. We could see in lessons and in your books that your work is getting much better and you are making good progress. You know that too because some of you told us how much better you are learning now. You also behave well and get on together. You are becoming confident, responsible young people. Occasionally, when people forget how to behave properly, you deal with it well and so do the adults.

Your teachers make lessons interesting and there are good opportunities for you to talk to each other about what you are learning. We have asked the teachers to think carefully about what you are learning so that they can ask you even more tricky questions to get you really thinking. We saw some very good lessons where you were involved in assessing and planning your own learning. I've asked your teachers to share their good ideas so that more lessons are like that.

The adults in school know each one of you so well it's a bit scary! They take great care of you and they have excellent systems for keeping a very close eye on you to make sure you are doing as well as you should be. If you need some extra support, they are very good at finding out what will work and where to get it from. There is a lot of good information about the youngest children and we've asked the school to look at that carefully and use it to plan activities which will help these children make faster progress.

I enjoyed my time with you, especially the African drumming in assembly, which was wonderful. I wish you every success in the future. Keep up the good work!

Yours faithfully

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector