

Argyle Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100008
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	335475
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Taylor

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Jones
Headteacher	Ms Laura Wynne
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, attendance data, pupil progress data, local authority reports on the school, curriculum documents and safeguarding information, pupils' work in books, and pupil, staff and parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- boys' achievement and the progress of the more able pupils
- achievement in mathematics and in writing for all pupils
- whether all pupils have positive attitudes to school and attend regularly
- the extent to which teaching and the provision engages and challenges pupils
- the impact that school leaders have on raising standards.

Information about the school

Pupils in this large school are drawn from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are Bangladeshi, Black African and Somali. A very high proportion are from homes where English is not the first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and with statements of special educational needs is higher than the national average. Pupils' needs include learning difficulties, speech, language and communication difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, autism and visual impairment. Pupil mobility is higher than the national average.

Children are admitted to the Early Years Foundation Stage Nursery classes when they are three years old and attend full-time. They join Reception in either September or January, depending on when they reach their fifth birthday. Children from other playgroups and nurseries also join the school in Reception. The school provides a daily breakfast club and a wide range of parent and family learning activities.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Argyle Primary is a good school. It is very inclusive and serves the needs of its diverse local community well. The school makes a strong contribution to community cohesion and has established excellent partnership with parents. Racial harmony and relationships at all levels are outstanding.

Teaching and learning are good. Consequently, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Progress has become more consistent across classes since the last inspection, due to better teaching and a reduction in staff turnover.

Standards are broadly average. Specific weaknesses in pupils' attainment, such as in writing and in mental calculations and problem-solving in mathematics, are being tackled. Inspection evidence shows that improvements to mathematics provision and standards are progressing swiftly, with many examples of good and sometimes outstanding mathematics lessons seen. Standards in writing are closer to those expected for pupils in Years 1 to 3 than in Years 4 to 6. This is because pupils in the lower school have benefited from all of the new systems put in place since the last inspection. General weaknesses evident from pupils' books relate to pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. The quality of handwriting, although improving for many pupils in the lower school, is especially weak for many of the older pupils. Pupils are nevertheless keen to write and have lots of ideas for writing.

Pupils and parents speak very highly of the school's provision, including the good standards of care and the very wide range of activities on offer. Inspectors agree with the pupils who wrote comments such as: 'Teachers take time to make our learning fun!' and 'We have exciting lessons.' The curriculum is very varied, interesting and challenging. It captures pupils' interests and addresses the needs of all ability groups. Pupils behave well, work very well together and are very polite and friendly. Their thorough enjoyment of school and learning is evident from their participation in a wide range of activities, their attentiveness in lessons and their eagerness to talk about their school and learning.

The school is well led and managed. Senior leaders' clear direction ensures that the commitment to improvement and achieving the school's aims is a shared one. Monitoring of provision, lessons, and pupils' progress is regular and effective. Leaders involve governors, staff, parents and pupils fully in evaluating the school's work. The results of monitoring and evaluation are used well to set the right priorities. In some instances, however, the criteria for measuring success and determining who will evaluate the impact of any initiatives is not well documented in the school improvement

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plan or the Early Years Foundation Stage development plan. The school's track record in making improvements, combined with leaders' determination and strong teamwork, nevertheless provides the school with a good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' skills in mental calculations and problem-solving by building on the good work that has started to:
- increase pupils' skills in quick recall of number facts
- amend teaching plans on a regular basis to ensure that pupils' skills are more embedded before moving on to the next topic
- provide regular opportunities for 'paired talk' in lessons and for pupils to apply mathematics skills to problem-solving and real-life situations.
- Raise standards in writing throughout the school, but especially in Years 4 to 6, by ensuring that:
 - pupils have increased opportunities to learn how to use correct punctuation, grammar and spelling
 - marking provides pupils with more detailed information about the mistakes they make and specific guidance about how to correct their errors
 - staff give more attention to improving pupils' handwriting skills.
- Bring greater precision to school improvement planning, including that in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that:
 - the criteria for measuring the impact of any improvements is clearly identified
 - it is clear who will evaluate the impact of any developments and how they will do so.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress across the areas of learning. Consequently standards on entry to Year 1 have improved and were broadly average in 2009. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 show some year-on-year variations, partly as a result of pupil mobility. That said, standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school have been improving steadily. Unvalidated data for 2009 shows that standards in writing and science were broadly average at the end of Year 2. Standards in mathematics and reading were below average, but not significantly so. In Year 6 in 2009, standards in English, mathematics and science were average. A notable improvement in both Years 2 and 6 in 2009 was that more pupils reached the higher levels of attainment than in previous years.

Pupils' current work shows that the trend of improvement is being maintained. Pupils learn well in lessons. Boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieve at similar rates. Achievement in writing and in problem-solving in mathematics has been relatively weaker than in other subjects. The school has a clear focus on addressing any gaps in learning and has introduced a range of strategies that are beginning to make a difference.

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Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour is good, and sometimes exemplary, making a strong contribution to all pupils' learning. Boys and girls are eager to learn, listen very well and, in many lessons, all hands are up to answer questions. Pupils are very proud of their school and achievements. Their participation in the school, in extra-curricular activities and in the wider communities is excellent. Pupils contribute fully to judging how well the school is doing and to the decision-making process, through day-to-day activities and the school council. They take an active role in community activities and participate fully in activities related to sustainable development, for example through recycling, rainwater collection, organic gardening and campaigning for improvement to their local environment. Through the diversity of the school's own population and very strong links with the wider UK and international communities, in Sweden and Sierra Leone for example, pupils develop a very good understanding of cultural diversity. Pupils exchange visits with their partner school in a village in Derbyshire and all pupils in Years 3 to 6 correspond with pupils in other schools either in the United Kingdom or abroad. .

Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy. Attendance continues to improve and is broadly average. Parents feel sure that the school prepares their children well for future life. Though there are still some weaknesses in pupils' basic skills, their ability to work independently and collaboratively and their maturity, confidence and thirst for learning are factors that contribute well to their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Particular strengths in almost all lessons lie in staff's strong subject knowledge, high expectations of pupils and their excellent relationships with them. Teachers use information and communication technology competently, which adds to pupils' interest. They provide many opportunities for discussions and paired and group work, therefore, pupils have regular opportunities to develop their speaking, clarify their thinking and share ideas.

Teachers always ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included in lessons and are well taught and provided with suitable tasks.

Well-trained teaching assistants make a strong contribution to teaching and supporting groups' and individual pupils' learning, for example by providing further explanations, prompts, visual clues and practical equipment. The whole-school focus on raising attainment, including for the potentially higher attainers, is clearly evident in the level of challenge posed, a brisk pace to lessons and teachers' very good questioning skills. In a small number of lessons, where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the pace slowed when pupils were expected to sit listening to the teacher for too long. This reduced the time left for pupils to work independently.

Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly during lessons and use their assessments well to plan lessons and set new learning targets for them. Older pupils develop the skill of reviewing their own work and learning. Marking is regular. However, in classes for older pupils, mistakes in written work are not pinpointed clearly enough and there is insufficient guidance about how pupils might improve it.

The broad, stimulating and exciting curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' progress and an excellent contribution to their personal development. Teachers link work in different subjects together well. They make very good use of visits and visitors to make learning enjoyable as was evident when pupils in Year 1 undertook follow-up work on toys after visiting a toy museum and pupils in Year 5 returned from a visit to the British Museum linked to a topic on Benin. The wide range of after-school activities are well attended. Strong links with the local community, the wider UK and international communities promote pupils' global awareness and cultural development particularly well.

The curriculum has been adapted to address any weaknesses in standards. A good number of 'catch-up' programmes and extension activities support pupils of different abilities and pupils new to learning English. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills means that pupils make particularly good progress in this area. Consequently, many older pupils are confident and articulate speakers.

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Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils' well-being is given a high priority and pastoral support is particularly strong. Staff respond to any concerns promptly and have forged strong links with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Child protection procedures are robust and there are good systems to track and encourage regular attendance. The school is very successful in integrating and supporting pupils who have been excluded from other schools. Risk assessments are regular, though two examples of where record-keeping is not sufficiently robust were drawn to the school's attention.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has high expectations of pupils and staff. She is very well respected by staff, parents and pupils. The well-informed deputy headteacher and senior leadership team very ably assist the headteacher in leading the school well. Leaders have rightly focused on strengthening teaching, raising expectations and renewing the emphasis on raising standards in English and mathematics while maintaining a broad curriculum. The governing body are proactive and well informed, therefore they challenge and support the school well. The school development plan is based on the results of good self-evaluation processes and contains the right priorities. It has a strong focus on raising standards, linked to clear and quantifiable outcomes in this regard. Some of the other priorities, however, are not sufficiently linked to measurable outcomes, and, while it is clear who will be responsible for developing certain aspects of provision, it is unclear who is responsible for monitoring the impact of any developments. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory and meet current government requirements.

The school is rigorous in its efforts to promote equality and to tackle discrimination. Although these are extremely rare, good systems are in place to address racist incidents. There is a high priority on ensuring that vulnerable pupils receive equal access to activities during and beyond the school day. The school has rightly identified that more able pupils need further challenge and is addressing this successfully. The school has good partnerships with other schools, agencies and institutions. Though it has not fully evaluated the impact of its sterling work in this area, the school makes a strong contribution to community cohesion at the local, wider UK community and international levels.

Partnership with parents and carers from a wide range of backgrounds is outstanding.

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The school provides a wide range of classes and drop-in services for parents, including those through extended services. From the time when children join Nursery, staff seek parents' views about their children's needs and progress. They strive to involve them and to ensure they know how best to support their children's learning. There are many opportunities for parents to be involved in the school and community events, to share their skills and work and learn together with staff and pupils. The school is always keen to get parents' views about provision, recent improvements, and what might make the school even better. Governors play a key role in engaging with parents.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Attainment on entry to Nursery is well below that usually found as many children are new to learning English and have fairly limited previous experiences outside their homes. Good induction arrangements, including home visits, help children to settle into school and begin to develop friendships, independence and good patterns of behaviour. Children are well cared for and usually eager to participate in activities.

Children make good progress across the areas of learning. Standards are rising and are broadly average at the end of Reception, except in writing and in some aspects of their personal, social and emotional development, and in physical development, where they are below average.

Teaching and learning are good. Staff place a strong emphasis on basic skills, teaching children's language development and their personal and social skills. They assess children's learning regularly and provide a good range of activities and the right balance

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between adult-led and child-initiated learning. In some lessons, however, more could be done to provide greater challenge and more stimulating experiences, especially outdoors. Good leadership is helping to raise standards. The improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities, including the need to further develop outdoor learning. The plan, however, is less clear about how any improvements will be monitored and evaluated.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are very supportive of the school. They especially appreciate the way the school keeps their children safe and the way that teaching enables children to make good progress. Nearly all think that the school is well led and managed and are happy with their children's experience at Argyle Primary. Inspectors endorse parents' positive views. A minority feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour, does not meet their children's particular needs or take account of parents' suggestions and concerns. Inspectors disagree with their views. Staff have a good knowledge of pupils and plan well to meet their needs. There are clear and appropriate procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and pupils said that any rare incidents of bad behaviour were dealt with efficiently. In addition to the questionnaires sent to parents twice a year, the school actively seeks parents' views on a whole range of issues both formally and informally. There are very many instances where parents have influenced and been partners in change. Staff are readily available on a day-to-day basis to answer any concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Argyle Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 163 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 419 number pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	99	61	59	36	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	84	52	72	44	3	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	74	45	79	48	6	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	46	75	46	5	3	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	85	52	71	43	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	45	74	45	6	4	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	72	44	80	49	5	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	72	44	80	49	5	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	32	83	51	12	7	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	35	85	52	10	6	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	36	85	52	9	5	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	73	45	81	50	2	1	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	88	54	63	38	2	1	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Argyle Primary School Tonbridge Street, London WC1H 9EG

Thank you very much for making us welcome when we visited your school. We agree with you that Argyle Primary is a good school. It was good to see how much you really enjoy your work and your learning. Many of you told us how much you love coming to school. We noticed that you enjoy chatting to visitors and that you behave well and work and play together exceptionally well.

When we visited your classes, we saw that teaching is good and the staff find lots of exciting things for you to do and learn. You have very many opportunities to learn from after-school events, visits and visitors. The staff look after you well. They listen to you and involve you fully in making decisions and improving the school. You have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy and you told us that staff help you if you have any problems.

Your headteacher and staff help you to make good progress. They are always working hard to make improvements to your school. We have asked them to continue to help you to improve your written work, handwriting and your skills in number and problem-solving. We have asked them to improve the way they write their plans about how to make the school even better.

You can help the staff. For example, you can learn your spellings and timetables and practise your handwriting. You can continue to do your best and to take good care of each other, so that your school continues to be a very happy place to be.

Yours faithfully

Kathy Taylor

Lead inspector

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