

Ben Jonson Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100890
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	335614
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Ruth McFarlane

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	444
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Ray Hall
Headteacher	Dr Melanie Rose
Date of previous school inspection	4 April 2007
School address	Essian Street Mile End London E1 4PZ
Telephone number	020 7790 4110
Fax number	020 7702 8874
Email address	head@benjonson.towerhamlets.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent 70 per cent of inspection time observing learning. They visited 19 lessons, observing 13 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school improvement plan and data showing the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils. They looked at pupil and staff surveys, the tracking of pupils' progress, examples of pupils' work, case histories of some vulnerable pupils, minutes of governors' meetings and 106 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- how effectively assessment is used in the classroom to promote progress
- the effectiveness of provision for the more able
- the impact of strategies to raise attainment in mathematics
- middle managers' impact on driving improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school. The vast majority of pupils are of Bangladeshi or Somali background, all of whom speak English as an additional language. Around one in four are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is smaller than that found nationally although a higher proportion have statements of special educational needs. Their difficulties are mostly in the speech, language and communication spectrum but some have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The number of pupils who either leave or join the school at other than the usual times is above average. The school has recently expanded into a substantial new extension to become a three-form entry school. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2009. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises three Reception classes. Extended services are provided including a breakfast club and a family learning programme. A nursery is located on the same site, not run by the governing body and not a part of this inspection.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Ben Jonson Primary is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. The headteacher and her senior team are fully committed to raising attainment whilst developing a strongly inclusive nurturing ethos that extends to all family members. As a result, all pupils are offered very high levels of care, support and guidance which are instrumental in helping them to learn and develop confidence, self-control and self-esteem. Parents are strongly supportive. Typical of the comments they made is, 'My child enjoys school and feels safe in the school premises.'

Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage although the use of the outside area is not well developed. In addition, until very recently assessment was not reliably accurate. Inspection evidence shows that pupils enter Year 1 with below average attainment having made satisfactory progress from their generally low starting points. By the end of Year 6 in 2009, achievement was satisfactory. Attainment in English, mathematics and science was below average overall. Pupils with special educational needs now make good progress because their individual needs are given a higher profile than previously and they are well supported. However, a number of pupils of all abilities did not make the expected progress in English or mathematics in 2009. The reason rests mainly in the variable quality of teaching. While this is satisfactory overall, it is inconsistent, leading to uneven progress. All lessons feature good relationships, probing questioning, effective behaviour management and the well-directed contribution of other adults assisting in the class. In some classes there is insufficient use of assessment. This results in the occasional gap in pupils' understanding of basic skills that teachers have missed. This then surfaces when more complex activities are tried further up the school, particularly in mental arithmetic and mathematical calculation. The recent practice of teaching mathematics in ability groups has meant that tasks are better fitted to ability. As a result gaps in learning, a weakness of which the school was aware, can be spotted more easily and closed. In a few lessons, tasks are not challenging enough to make pupils think. When this happens, there is an adverse impact, especially on the progress of the more able pupils.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, a direct result of the ethos of consideration and care promoted by all staff. Pupils get on very well together. They respond enthusiastically in the vast majority of lessons. They want to learn and they behave well. They enjoy the breakfast club and the good range of after-school activities. Enjoying all that is on offer is one reason why pupils say they love coming to school, as shown by their high attendance. Pupils reap the benefits of good planning that links subjects together in a good curriculum and emphasises the usefulness of tasks to their future lives.

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Several factors indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve. Leaders have made an accurate assessment of the school's current quality. The headteacher exhibits a passion for making improvements. She is orchestrating the drive forward, ensuring that middle managers' training, currently under way, fits them for the task in hand. Until recently, governors had not been provided with sufficient information about attainment that enabled them to hold the school to account effectively. They are now far more involved with staff and pupils, more aware of current attainment and monitor what is happening in school. Additional staff training is under way to deal with the remaining inconsistencies that hold pupils back. Inspection evidence shows that in the past few months, improvements in rates of progress and in attainment are evident in a number of classes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, develop the use of the outside area so that by September 2010, it is in constant free-flow use and offers a range of assessed activity to help children learn and develop.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, improve the quality of assessment so that the end-of-stage assessments are reliably accurate.
- Improve teaching throughout the school so that:
 - an increasing proportion of pupils achieve the nationally expected levels and the higher levels, in English and mathematics
 - tasks are sufficiently challenging to extend learning for all groups in all lessons
 - teachers fully develop their skills in the use of assessment in the classroom
- Develop fully the skills of managers at all levels so that planning, teaching and monitoring ensure that pupils do not suffer any gaps in their learning of basic skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Progress and achievement are satisfactory overall, whatever pupils' backgrounds, gender or ethnicity. There is evidence that progress is accelerating in a number of classes because the drive to improve teaching is having a positive impact. However, progress is inconsistent and depends on how good teaching is. Pupils are responding well to initiatives, especially to those introduced to achieve improvement in mathematics. Here, during the inspection, teaching in small groups which were precisely focused on a narrower ability range meant that tasks were tailored to individual needs. In English, work on poetry encouraged pupils to think imaginatively and their vocabulary in creative writing improved as a result. The many pupils at an early stage of learning English make equivalent progress to their peers because they benefit from well-focused nurturing support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making good progress because they are given enhanced support and their needs have a high profile in the school. Though these improvements were evident during the inspection, attainment at age 11 in English, mathematics and science was below

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average overall in 2009. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at age seven has been on a steady upward trend but was also still just below average. Few pupils reached the higher National Curriculum levels in English or mathematics at either key stage, although the number increased from the previous year.

There are clear strengths in pupils' moral and social awareness. Pupils show excellent awareness of why they need to lead healthy lifestyles. They told inspectors how well the school ensures that they feel safe and secure in school and how well they understand how to keep safe in a range of situations including on the internet, while using mobile phones and in various situations they might encounter outside school. Relationships throughout the school are good and pupils are well aware of right and wrong. Pupils routinely discuss ideas and reflect on what they are learning. As one pupil typically commented, 'My school is totally amazing. We care about each other; the adults are interested in our views and keep us safe.' Pupils' awareness, understanding of, and contribution to, the local community are good, and pupils are prepared for their futures through activities involving enterprise and business and use of new technology. Although pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy had been lagging behind these strengths, improvements over recent months mean that pupils are helped to make satisfactory preparation for adult life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	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 of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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How effective is the provision?

The average and satisfactory nature of outcomes in pupils' previous attainment, achievement and progress mirrors the quality of teaching. The thrust to improve teaching is beginning to translate into improved progress and a number of good lessons were seen, but the improvements have yet to show in pupils' raised attainment. Some teachers use assessment well in the classroom and ask probing questions, which require pupils to draw conclusions and offer opinions. Pupils who find learning difficult and who are in special groups are taught particularly well. In weaker lessons, although satisfactory, inconsistencies in the effective use of assessment information to plan lessons and spot gaps in understanding mean that the key skills of some children are weak and the more able pupils are not always given tasks to challenge and extend their thinking.

The curriculum is appealing. Work to develop its relevance and enjoyment is reaping rewards in pupils' enhanced interest in school and their keenness to attend. An exciting range of additional activities, a strong programme of personal, social and health education and lessons in information and communication technology all underpin the strengths in pupils' personal development. During the inspection, pupils were excited and interested in a new activity involving calming sessions of 'peer massage', brought to them by outside professionals. The activities which extend the school's provision at both ends of the day ensure a continuing ethos of pupil care. Residential visits for pupils along with their families do much to cement the family feeling in the school and form the foundation for outstanding care, support and guidance offered. Staff know pupils well. Support for those who need additional help is exceptional, a strength that is recognised by pupils and parents alike.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders have a precise grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are driving forward focused improvements. Benefits are evident in the rising quality of pupils' personal development and in their accelerating progress. Planning and performance management are robust. Pupils are set challenging, measurable targets for

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the key subjects. Regular, individual interviews with parents and carers, pupils and teachers to examine examples of their work are just one indication of the very strong partnership that exists. Pupils' progress is analysed in detail so that support can be given to any pupils that fall behind and praise for every success. Middle managers are receiving the necessary training to carry forward improvements in classroom practice through robust monitoring. The governing body takes a keen interest. Governors now monitor school practice but until recently had not been given sufficient information on school performance to hold the school to account effectively. The school has made significant gains in cohesion with its parents in this diverse community and extends these efforts successfully in the wider national and global community. The inclusive ethos of the school and the high profile given to pupils with additional needs all ensure that equality of opportunity is well embedded. Diligent safeguarding contributes to the excellent pastoral care. The level of pupils' attainment and progress confirms that the school currently provides satisfactory value for money although improvements are evident and embedding.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

By the time they start Year 1, most children have not reached the standards expected of five-year-olds nationally. Inspection evidence shows that, based on their starting points, outcomes for children are satisfactory. Children are happy and enthusiastic learners. Progress in key skills and in the development of personal skills is satisfactory because staff are caring and pay attention to individual need. Children enjoy taking responsibility

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for small tasks such as putting away toys and this helps them develop skills for the future. Staff help children to learn and develop through a range of interesting activities. The outside area is limited in size and not well developed. Although some activities are available there, during the inspection these were not as attractively laid out or as stimulating as some of the indoor activities. Children's needs are identified and provided for and children's welfare is promoted satisfactorily. As a result, they receive a balance of adult-led activities and those they choose for themselves. Activities are well supervised by adults and progress is carefully assessed. Leadership is satisfactory. Recent changes are slow to be fully effective because the newly appointed senior manager for early years, who shows a clear understanding of the requirements for the under-fives, has class responsibilities in Key Stage 1. Anomalies in teachers' end of year assessment in previous years are only now being dealt with. Planning takes appropriate account of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and day-to-day assessment is now carefully focused on the individual. A very strong partnership is evident with parents, carers and outside agencies.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

Almost all the responses to the parental questionnaire were strongly supportive of the school and its work. Parents rate very highly the way the school keeps their children safe and promotes healthy lifestyles. They say their children enjoy school very much. They are very pleased with the way the schools helps parents to support their child's learning. A very small minority of parents felt that the school does not prepare their child well enough for the future. Inspectors concluded that strengths are evident in preparing pupils for the world of business and enterprise, and noted improvements in raising attainment in basic skills. The very few other individual concerns are known to the school and are being dealt with.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ben Jonson 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 106 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 444 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	74	70	32	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	57	54	49	46	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	61	58	42	40	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	40	60	57	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	57	54	45	43	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	49	50	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	31	73	69	0	0	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)	36	34	58	55	6	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	30	66	63	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	48	45	43	4	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	31	62	59	5	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	43	54	51	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	59	41	39	1	1	0	0

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.



20 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ben Jonson Primary School, Stepney, London E1 4PZ

Thank you for your lovely warm welcome and help when we came to inspect your school recently. The tour guides gave us a super start to getting to know what you think of your school and what life is like at your school.

I can tell you that the school is satisfactory. That means some things are fine and some things could be better. As I am sure you know, it is improving fast. Your headteacher and staff make a good team. They make sure you are safe and take extremely good care of you. Support for those of you with special learning needs is particularly good. You told us you feel lucky to have an interesting range and number of clubs and activities and we agree. You obviously thoroughly enjoy being at school. Your parents agree.

Standards in mathematics and English were not as high as for most other children in the country last year. We know you have all been concentrating on improving these skills. Those of you who find learning easy sometimes do not have hard enough tasks to do. We have asked staff and governors to help more with these problems. Teachers can do this by using the information they have about your progress to make sure they give you tasks that make you think a bit harder. They can also help by making sure you have no gaps in the knowledge you should have by the time you reach Year 6 especially in numeracy. That will make it easier to meet the challenges of your adult life. You can help by listening to your teachers and working as hard as you can.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth McFarlane

Lead inspector

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