

Mowlem Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100914
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	335620
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Rogers

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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Brown
Headteacher	Ms J R Burns
Date of previous school inspection	2 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors observed 13 part-lessons, visited all classrooms on a learning walk to sample displays, behaviour and resources, and held meetings with governors, staff, parents and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and examined pupils' books and school documents, including the school development plan, safety records and assessment information. They analysed questionnaires returned by staff, pupils and parents. Inspectors looked in detail at the following:

- the work the school is doing to eliminate variations in attainment between cohorts and between different key subjects
- Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage to see if reported good progress from last year is being sustained
- personal development, especially spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, and the provision of care, guidance and support
- the impact of the school's new curriculum on pupils' attitudes and progress
- the effectiveness of the school's work in managing the improvement of teaching.

Information about the school

This small primary school serves an ethnically diverse community. Most of the population are of Bangladeshi origin, with the remainder having Black African, Caribbean or European roots. The Nursery takes children on both a full-time and part-time basis. Few of the pupils speak English on entry. At about 16%, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. Most of these pupils have speech and language difficulties. The school holds the Activemark and the Healthy School award. Staff turnover has been relatively high over recent years.

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

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Good relationships and a continuously developing personal, social and health programme mean that learners do well in aspects of their personal development. They benefit from a lively, well-planned curriculum. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they reach standards that are generally in line with national averages in mathematics, English and science. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily, but progress is uneven for most pupils as they move through the school because the quality of teaching is variable. Children get off to a good start when they enter the school. Teachers in the Reception and Nursery classes work hard to develop the children's language skills, building their vocabulary. Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is more variable, partly because new staff are still settling in. Variable teaching in the past has led to fluctuations in test results at the end of Year 6. In 2008, results in mathematics were very low, while in English they were much better. The school's current information and work in pupils' books show that mathematics has now improved, while pupils' writing is relatively weak. Pupils' progress is less good where teachers do not make effective use of assessment to set the work at the right level. Learners are not always clear enough about what they are expected to do.

The school's awards testify to pupils' good progress in learning to be healthy through well-planned schemes of work and good sports provision. Leaders do well in ensuring that pupils have a strong voice through class and school councils. They are able to influence life in school in many ways, including greatly improving the playground space, through liaison with an architect. Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is also strong, with pupils particularly enjoying opportunities to learn about life in other cultures and about other faiths.

Questionnaires analysed show that most parents are happy with the school and believe it is well managed. A typical comment was, 'This school is good for my child!' The school has increased the size of its management team and together they have clearly identified the strengths of the school and the important areas for development. They have not always set specific enough measurable targets for their plans, in order to drive improvement more quickly. Teachers have been well supported on an individual basis but leaders are not systematic enough about developing the staff as whole. Again, this slows impact. Nevertheless, the school has made progress in some areas. Mathematics results have improved and girls are doing better than they were. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. The school therefore has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good by the end of the academic year through:
- ensuring that teachers make good use of assessment information to set work at the correct level, matching the ability of all the pupils
- making sure that pupils understand, through explanation, feedback and marking, what they are expected to do to succeed in and improve their work.
- Improve the rigour of planning and monitoring by ensuring that school development plan targets are specific and measurable. This is to be completed by the end of December 2009.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Achievement is satisfactory, but progress varies between classes and between subjects because of variable teaching. Leaders recognised that pupils were doing less well in mathematics and took steps to improve teachers' methods and knowledge. This has resulted in improvement across the school. English has been relatively strong for the last three years, especially taking into account the pupils' low starting points in language when they begin school. However, overall English scores mask weaknesses in writing, especially in the use of vocabulary and sentence structure, as pupils struggle with unfamiliar idioms. This is because, at times, inaccurate teacher assessment results in work that covers too much old ground for more able pupils. The school is now focusing on this issue and also developing more effective assessment. Girls were underperforming in the past compared to national benchmarks, especially in mathematics. The school's work in this area is beginning to close the gap and develop girls' confidence. Pupils with language difficulties are well supported through effective interventions, good inter-agency work and the appropriate deployment of teaching assistants.

Pupils appreciate their lessons and work hard. They persevere even when they are unsure what to do. They collaborate well in the classroom and are generally polite. Their behaviour around the school and in the playground is livelier. On occasion, some groups of pupils play in a way that lacks consideration for others, for example, taking up too much of the available space. Pupils say that they feel safe and that any bullying is swiftly dealt with. They enjoy helping others and have, for instance, made a useful cultural link with a night school in Bangladesh, raising money for a generator. Attendance dipped slightly last year, but is now improving again thanks to the school's rigorous procedures and prized incentives for the class with the best weekly record. The school works hard to support pupils in transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 1 and from Year 6 to the secondary schools. This has led to an improvement in pupils' confidence at these moments of change in their lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Leaders' support is ensuring that teachers develop their skills, and school records show clear improvement. Some good lessons were observed, where teaching moved at a fast pace, explanations were clear and teachers' knowledge was good. Use of assessment has been a school focus and better knowledge of what pupils should be doing and an emphasis on real-life problem solving have improved the teaching of mathematics. Assessment is currently less effective in supporting the teaching of writing. There are times when work set is too easy for pupils, especially those who are more able. There are also occasions when teachers do not demonstrate tasks well enough and so pupils are unclear what they should do in their independent work. Teachers manage behaviour well and most lessons are interesting as a result of the well-designed curriculum.

Pupils respond well to the thematic approach, making links between subjects. This makes subjects relevant and interesting and provides more opportunities to teach basic skills. The mathematics curriculum has improved and this is reflected in rising standards. The school is now, rightly, working on improving the provision for science and writing still further. The effective personal, social and health education programme is also well integrated into other subjects. For example, pupils were seen benefitting from several good aspects of school provision as they created puppets and utilised these to learn to express their feelings on a range of issues. There is a good range of clubs and pupils participate enthusiastically, particularly enjoying the range of sports clubs provided as a

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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result of the school's partnerships with other institutions. Multi-agency partnerships are also key in supporting those pupils who have learning difficulties. They make good progress in English because of good support and very careful tracking of the development of their language skills. Their progress in mathematics is satisfactory and interventions in this subject are consequently under review. These pupils and their parents are increasingly involved in evaluating their progress and setting regular new targets.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher works well with her senior managers and other subject leaders. They share a common vision and are supported by an effective governing body. Governors are very well informed and active and hold the school to account for its performance in a positive, supportive manner. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and has led to improvements in some areas of the curriculum and in the quality of teaching for some individuals. Nevertheless, improvement has been less rapid than it might have been because monitoring systems are not sufficiently robust. Leaders' work has also been hindered by staff turnover, resulting in the continuing need to train and support staff in this small school. They have recognised that different approaches are necessary to counteract these problems and have begun to reorganise responsibility for key subjects in order to provide continuity in subject leadership.

Systems for ensuring safeguarding of pupils are satisfactory. The school works hard to eliminate racist incidents, taking them very seriously. They are very aware of all issues relating to equality of opportunity and are now focusing on closing the gap in attainment for girls and for more able pupils. Partnerships with other schools and with agencies and businesses are strong. Businesses provide volunteers to help with several areas of the curriculum as well as representatives on the governing body. Partnerships with parents are also well developed, with regular consultations built in for parents to express views on different aspects of school life. Leaders have good plans for developing community cohesion and are introducing links with several schools, locally, nationally and internationally. These links are too new for the school to be able to evaluate impact as yet.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the school with skill levels that are well below those that would be expected of typical three- and four-year-olds. This is mainly because most do not speak English. They settle in quickly, with strong induction procedures and good communication with parents. Good management has resulted in good teaching. This in its turn has led to good improvements in progress. By the time they enter Year 1, children are working at levels that are at least in line with national expectations in most areas of their learning. Good relationships develop quickly. Adults work hard and well in group sessions, where the children enjoy well-planned activities that develop their social and language skills. For instance, both Nursery and Reception classes were happily engaged in a selection of role play and creative activities linked to 'Kipper's' birthday. Planning for independent activities is less well developed and children are not always clear what they might be learning while playing. Opportunities to discuss learning and evaluate it are sometimes missed as a result.

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	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

The number of returned questionnaires (29) was relatively small in proportion to the size of the school. The very large majority of parents were positive in response to all the questions and thought that the school was effective. A few expressed concern about the inconsistency of teaching and lack of communication about children's progress.

Inspectors agree that teaching is a little variable and have made the school aware of other concerns, though there was no evidence found to substantiate these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mowlem 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 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 216 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	49	12	41	2	7	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	14	48	11	38	3	10	1	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	45	11	38	2	7	2	7
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	45	12	41	0	0	4	14
The teaching is good at this school	19	65	5	17	0	0	4	14
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	52	8	28	3	10	3	10
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	59	10	34	1	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)	13	45	9	31	1	3	3	10
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	31	14	48	2	7	3	10
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	41	9	31	2	7	4	14
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	38	11	38	2	7	2	7
The school is led and managed effectively	12	41	8	28	2	7	2	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	62	6	21	0	0	4	14

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.



30 September 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Mowlem Primary School, London E2 9HE

Thank you very much for being so helpful when we visited your school. Talking to you and watching you while you worked helped us find out a lot. Special thanks to the pupils who gave up time to talk to us, so we could find out what you thought about school and what you had learned.

We have decided that your school is satisfactory. This means that some areas are good and other areas could be improved. You do well in some aspects of your personal education. Your knowledge about being healthy is good, partly because you have some exciting sports clubs on offer. You behave well in the classrooms and work together effectively. You learn a lot about other cultures and faiths. We like the way that you play a useful part in running the school through your class and school councils. You are also good at helping others by raising money and making links with other schools. You make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, but you could be doing better with your writing. Those of you who need extra help with your work get good support and learn at a good rate.

We have asked your headteacher to improve your progress by trying to make sure that all the teaching is consistently good. This includes making sure that work is always hard enough for all of you and that you always understand what it is that you have to do. We have also asked her to look at different ways of measuring school improvement so that it will happen more quickly.

You can play your part by coming to school every day unless you are ill and by working hard. Make sure you always ask if you are not sure what to do!

With very best wishes,

Yours faithfully,

Sue Rogers

Lead Inspector

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