

Dollis Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101355
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	335702
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Monaghan
Headteacher	Mr C Dowland
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff with management responsibilities, pupils and the local authority school improvement partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires were analysed from 44 parents/carers, 103 pupils and 21 members of staff.

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

- how well the school is improving pupils' writing skills
- the extent to which leaders and managers are driving school improvement
- how well the school is working with its parents and the community
- the effectiveness of assessment to support learning.

Information about the school

This junior school is larger than average. Pupils come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, the largest groups being those with White British, Asian or Black African heritage. A majority speak English as an additional language although few are at an early stage of learning English. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' needs most often relate to speech, language and communication or moderate learning difficulties. The school is accredited as a Healthy School and has gained an Activemark for its work in sport.

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

Dollis Junior is a good school. Over the past two years the headteacher and senior leaders have successfully steered the school onto a stable footing and improved the school from its satisfactory position at the previous inspection. This is because clear and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have enabled the headteacher and senior leaders to focus on the most important aspects for improvement. As a result, by the time they leave the school, pupils' overall attainment is average and they achieve well from their generally below average starting points.

Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, do well because the teaching and the recently revised curriculum are good and provide them with opportunities to be creative and develop their talents and interests. Sport and music, for example, have a high priority in the curriculum as do a good focus on English and mathematics. On occasion, however, work is not always pitched at the right level and this sometimes slows the progress for some pupils, especially the more able. The school makes good use of its grounds to enhance pupils' learning. For example, each class has its own allotment and pupils enjoy following the development of the recently acquired chickens.

The improvement in pupils' attainment in mathematics since 2008 is particularly notable. The school identified mathematics as a focus for its work and, as a result, attainment in the 2009 provisional national test results was above average. In English, despite good improvement since 2008, pupils' writing skills are holding them back. The inspectors agree with the school's own view that attainment in writing is not good enough and is an area to improve. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length or apply their writing skills for different purposes in subjects across the curriculum. The school has begun to address this and in some classes teaching gives pupils clear examples and explanations of how to be successful writers. However, this is inconsistent across the school.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and they are enthusiastic learners. Parents agree that their children enjoy school but they do not feel that they are given enough information about their progress or ways in which they can support their learning. Although satisfactory, inspectors agree that more could be done to engage parents in their children's learning. The school has successfully reduced absence rates over time and attendance is now average. Pupils appreciate the interesting range of activities that teachers provide in lessons. They especially enjoy the clubs, visitors to school, and trips, which enrich the good curriculum well. The school provides good care, guidance and support for all its pupils. As a consequence pupils develop good personal skills including their spiritual, moral, social and particularly cultural awareness. One parent wrote, 'The

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school cares about its children and has a very good team of people working together to make this happen.' The level of pupils' basic skills and their good personal skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. However, the school does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to take the lead in some activities. There are missed opportunities, for example, for pupils to run the school tuck shop. This would enable them to develop their management and organisational skills in a real life situation and contribute to their future economic well-being.

The headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders, has created a shared commitment to raising attainment and improving provision still further. This is illustrated by the success of their work in raising attainment in mathematics. This was a point for improvement in the previous inspection report. Challenging targets have been used by the school to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide clear ambition and direction for further improvement. Other key staff make a good contribution to improvement through developing the provision in subjects. However, they are not always sufficiently focused on monitoring teaching and learning in lessons. As a result, they are unable to check that work is always pitched at the right level to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they might. It is the drive for further development, on top of a track record of success, that demonstrate the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in writing by:
 - ensuring pupils have time to write at length
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills for a range of purposes in different subjects
 - sharing good practice to ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of writing across the school.
- Ensure work is consistently pitched at the right level to provide challenge for pupils of all abilities by:
 - developing the role of middle managers and subject leaders to include more systematic monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons.
- Strengthen the partnership with parents by:
 - finding out what they want to know
 - providing more information on how they can support their children's learning.

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

Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. One pupil wrote, 'I like to go to school because I get to learn lots of stuff and it is fun.' Consequently, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Boys and girls do equally well. Occasionally in some lessons the tasks provided do not enable all ability groups to learn quickly because activities are

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too hard or are not sufficiently challenging. This tends to slow the learning of high attainers and contributes to the slower progress made by pupils from White British backgrounds more than any other groups. There was a dip in attainment in the 2008 national tests owing to some disruption in staffing and management and provision for additional support. This has now been remedied and levels of attainment showed a sharp increase in 2009.

In lessons, behaviour is good. Pupils get on well together and value and respect the diversity of backgrounds, cultures and faiths. Pupils confirm that occasional boisterous behaviour is dealt with well by the adults. Pupils' enthusiastic participation in a range of sporting activities and their understanding of healthy eating and balanced diets contributes to their good awareness of and commitment to a healthy lifestyle. Pupils take their responsibilities around the school very seriously. Members of the school council are proud of what they have achieved, for example by instigating opportunities to learn about different faiths in assembly. Pupils said they would like even more responsibility.

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	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?

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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Teaching is often skilful, motivating and enthusiastic. Pupils appreciate the sense of humour and fun that teachers inject into their lessons. Much emphasis has been given to providing additional support for developing pupils' word recognition and spelling skills. This has proved to be successful. However, the school recognises this has reduced the time available for pupils to develop their skills in writing at length across the subjects. Most teachers manage their classrooms well and teaching assistants provide skilled and generally well-targeted support. Good assessment is an integral part of most lessons. Teachers carefully check on pupils' progress at significant points and encourage them to explain what they have learned. There are good examples of marking that gives pupils clear pointers for improving their work but this is inconsistent across classes and subjects.

The good curriculum is effective in ensuring that pupils achieve well and develop good personal qualities. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme, for example, is very effective and encourages pupils to reflect on their rights and responsibilities. Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) are also given a high priority and contribute well to developing pupils as well-rounded individuals. Over the past year the school has worked very hard to revise the curriculum to meet the needs of its pupils through planning topics that are interesting and link subjects in a meaningful way. The school acknowledges that more remains to be done to embed its plans consistently across the school.

Parents and pupils agree that the school looks after them well. One pupil wrote, 'I love coming to this school. The teachers are caring, humorous and fun to work with.' Vulnerable pupils, including those who have specific needs, are well provided for through a nurture group and art therapy, which help them achieve as well as their peers. All pupils benefit from access to the school's welfare officer and learning mentors. Partnership with other agencies is embedded within the work of the school and makes a very positive contribution to pupils' well-being and provides well-targeted support for pupils.

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 school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination very effectively. It ensures that all pupils have every chance to take part in all of its activities and, as a result, all groups of pupils achieve well. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to

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community cohesion. It actively promotes global dimensions through its links with other schools in several countries and the multicultural dimension of the curriculum. The school recognises that links with the local community, including its partnership with parents, are not strong enough. Plans to broaden and strengthen its understanding of the needs of the local community and parents are underway with the opening of a suite of parent and community rooms, the 'Sunshine Suite' during the week of the inspection. A local community group is already interested in using the rooms as a meeting place. The strong impact of leadership is seen in how effectively the headteacher and senior managers are embedding ambition and driving improvement. The success of this commitment is evident in the way barriers to learning are being effectively tackled. Consequently, achievement is rising and ambitious targets are being set and achieved. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and know the school well but their work is not focused sharply enough on holding the school to account for its performance or evaluating the impact of its work. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are good and the school ensures that pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Resources are deployed effectively to ensure that outcomes for pupils are good and that good value for money is achieved.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents responded to the Ofsted questionnaire with their views about the school. The vast majority agreed that their children enjoyed school and most were happy with their child's experience of school. A few have concerns about how well

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the school informs them about their children's progress and how well they are helped to support their children's learning. Although satisfactory, inspectors agree that more could be done to strengthen links with parents. The school has already identified this and included it as a priority in the school improvement plan.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dollis Junior 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 337 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	57	19	43	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	55	19	43	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	36	55	50	6	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	39	23	52	4	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	52	16	36	5	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	41	19	46	7	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	41	20	48	6	14	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)	14	32	21	48	4	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	34	22	50	5	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	36	26	59	2	5	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	41	23	52	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	39	22	50	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	48	19	43	3	7	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.



22 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dollis Junior School, London, NW7 2BU

You may remember that I visited your school recently with two other inspectors. I am writing to thank you for being so friendly and telling us what you thought about your school. You are right to enjoy coming to Dollis Junior because it is a good school.

We agree with you and your parents that your school is a caring and safe place to be and this helps you make good progress. Your school has improved since the last visit by the inspectors because the headteacher and all the adults have been working very hard to make it better for you. You do as well as children in other schools in your mathematics and science work but you could be doing a bit better in your writing. Well done for trying so hard to become fit and healthy.

Here are some of the things that we believe will help the school get even better.

- We have asked your teachers to give you more time to practise your writing skills in different subjects so that you can make even better progress.
- The adults are going to do more checking up on how well they are supporting your learning. You can help by telling your teacher if your work is too easy or too difficult.
- The school is going to work more closely with your parents or carers so they can help you improve your work and do even better.

The headteacher and staff are determined that you can do even better and you can help them by always working hard and doing your best.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Coussins

Lead inspector

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