

# Alexandra Junior School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 101585          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Bromley         |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 335753          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 9–10 March 2010 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Kevin Hodge     |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Junior                                       |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                                    |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 7–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 220  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                           |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Jon Sherman                                  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Hilary Jarvis                                |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 27 February 2007                             |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Cator Road<br>Sydenham<br>London<br>SE26 5DS |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 020 87783961                                 |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 020 87786877                                 |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | hilary.jarvis@alexandra-jun-bromleysch.uk    |

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

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Around two thirds of inspectors' time was spent looking at learning. Inspectors saw all seven teachers, teaching either whole classes or smaller groups of pupils. In all, 10 lessons were observed as well as other activities taken by sports coaches. Meetings were held with two different groups of pupils. Inspectors held meetings with two governors, including the chair of governors and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan and various policies. The 112 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers as well responses to staff and pupils' questionnaires were analysed.

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

- how well pupils, particularly the more able, achieve in their writing and science
- how senior leaders, including governors, promote improvement, particularly in aspects such as pupils' progress, teaching and community cohesion
- the apparently good outcomes in pupils' personal development, well-being and sense of safety.

## Information about the school

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although just over a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above average. Their needs include behavioural, emotional and academic difficulties. The school has a number of awards reflecting its contribution to developing pupils' healthy lifestyles, such as the Healthy School award and Activemark. A number of visitors regularly teach and promote sporting activities during lessons and outside normal school hours.

**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

There have been some improvements since the school's last inspection, and it is now well placed to become even better. The latest national test results were the best for some time, particularly in mathematics and reading, but, despite this rise, pupils' attainment is broadly average. Most pupils make satisfactory progress, as they did at the last inspection, although it is uneven between classes and subjects. In writing, pupils present neat, structured stories and accounts, but their ability to write more imaginatively or to use their skills in other subjects is not as secure, particularly for the most able. In science, pupils' investigative skills are not developed well enough in solving 'real-life' scientific problems or dilemmas.

Pupils speak enthusiastically and fondly about their school. They enjoy attending and behave well. Teaching is improving, but is typically satisfactory, rather than good. Not enough lessons consistently stretch the most able, focus strongly on the required learning being sought or extend their basic skills. The school makes good provision for pupils' care and guidance. The school's provision of extra guidance for parents and pupils, through family and learning mentor, are valid reasons why pupils say they feel safe and know who to turn to for help if needed. Pupils take part in a wide range of local activities, such as music festivals and sporting competitions. These extend pupils' artistic talents and help promote their healthy lifestyles. Good activity levels at playtimes help them keep fit, although pupils commented that they would value equipment to help them devise more games. Pupils know their own immediate locality well and the varying backgrounds and beliefs of classmates, but their awareness of others from communities much further from the school is not as well developed.

The headteacher, supported by governors, has a determination to improve. She has succeeded in fostering higher academic levels in some subjects, promoting good levels of behaviour and care, as well as links with parents. However, the reality is that changes, such as reducing pupils' past underachievement and steps to improve teaching and ensure pupils' quicker progress, are taking longer to take effect. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve given that issues from the last inspection have been addressed well and that the school's self-evaluation identifies clear priorities to help guide further improvements. The signs are good that these improvements, including capacity to improve further, are gathering pace, as the desire to improve is much more a whole-school priority and focus as expectations are higher in terms of the school's overall effectiveness

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve pupils' consistency and pace of learning, particularly in their writing and science work, by:
  - ensuring pupils develop and use their writing skills in other subjects
  - giving pupils extra guidance to develop and widen their written vocabulary
  - setting pupils more problem-centred investigations in their science work.
- Raise the quality and consistency of teaching this academic year by:
  - making sure that lesson aims centre on what pupils must learn, not do
  - raising the pace of pupils' learning, particularly the most able
  - giving pupils more guidance on how they can gauge their own success in learning.
- Improve the pupils' awareness of differing communities and people by:
  - developing contacts with schools in the United Kingdom and beyond
  - seeking to exchange simple information about the school, its pupils and the area each serves.

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

Pupils' academic levels have improved since the last inspection. This has been most noticeable in mathematics and aspects of English, such as reading. As a result, pupils' attainment is broadly average. Their progress varies, sometimes between subjects and between classes, mainly because not all teaching is of consistently good quality. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as classmates as they are supported appropriately and well integrated into the life of the school. Those who speak English as an additional language keep pace with their peers. Pupils' willingness to work together and their good behaviour means they enjoy most lessons. This was particularly evident during a 'Project Day' connected with work about Victorians in Year 6. Among many activities, they enjoyed entering an imaginary mineshaft made of desks covered in dark cloth. Only when pupils are not so motivated or clear about what they should do in lessons does their behaviour occasionally dip. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to fellow pupils.

The school council enjoy their role in helping to shape the direction of the school. Their surveys to see what playground improvements are favoured by classmates and their promotion of 'Walk Wednesdays' are recent highlights. Pupils' activity levels are high, both during lesson time and when sports coaches take additional activities. Pupils say they really like taking part in these extra activities before or after school, and one pupil said that she could not wait to start running around the school for cross-country club. Pupils take part and enjoy additional musical activities, such as choir, violin and recorder playing.

*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

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>   | 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                      | 3        |
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>   | 3        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>  | <b>2</b> |

### How effective is the provision?

A curriculum which successfully combines different subjects and aspects into areas of learning is beginning to take shape. However, it is not resulting in plans for enough stimulating and relevant activities that teachers readily adapt into lively and motivating lessons. The teaching of some subjects, such as science, relies on conventional rather than innovative approaches to problem solving to sharpen pupils' investigative skills. A wide number of extra-curricular activities help broaden pupils' skills and interests successfully. There are pockets of good teaching, however this is not consistent throughout the school. Teachers often plan activities which demand too little in terms of the pupils' pace of learning, particularly for the most able. Pupils complete tasks with a sense of pride, but this tends to be because the task is done rather than by learning a new idea or skill. This is often because the aims of the lesson focus on the task rather than the idea or skill to be grasped.

Pupils are well managed. Practical activities enliven number work, illustrated in Year 5 when pupils investigated postal rates for 'granny's' parcel. In some lessons, pupils' attention wanders as teachers' introductions or explanations are overly long, causing some frustration. Teachers mark work regularly and include helpful comments to guide pupils in how to improve their work. In lessons, not enough guidance is given to pupils to help them gauge their own success in learning. Vulnerable pupils are supported well following a clear identification of their needs. Good arrangements with the local infant

<sup>1</sup> 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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and secondary schools help pupils have a smooth transition to and from the school. One parent's view that, 'The environment is caring so that the children are made to feel an important part of society' was an accurate view.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher has promoted a more direct focus upon improving pupils' academic levels to complement the good levels of personal development and care found in the school. It has taken time to reduce past underachievement and weaknesses in teaching quality, but there are encouraging signs that an upward trend in both areas is emerging. Senior leaders are increasingly guiding subjects with a clearer focus on improving the curriculum and pupils' progress, aided by new systems to monitor it more accurately. Monitoring of teaching and book work is leading to improvements, although lesson observations focus more on teaching methods than the pupils' learning, which reduces their usefulness. Staff and governors are clear about their duties to ensure pupils' safety, and checks on staffing appointment and visitors are carried out to a good standard.

The harmonious relationships among pupils is due partly to the school not tolerating discrimination in any form and ensuring that pupils have equal access to the opportunities provided. Better monitoring is highlighting where some groups of pupils achieve better than others. The school is directing extra efforts with increasing success to ensure differences are minimised. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory rather than good, as pupils' awareness of others much further from the school is not as good as their well-informed views of classmates and the local community. Governors support the school conscientiously and share the sense of urgency that raising pupils' academic achievement is an important aspect to ensuring their future success. Their role as 'critical friends' is partly successful as headteacher reports and data are questioned well by governors at meetings, but this is not complemented by regular monitoring to help inform their decision making.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning                      | 3        |

**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

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>  | <b>3</b> |

**Views of parents and carers**

There was a 50% response rate from parents and carers. Some parents added comments to their responses. These were a mixture of positive comments and others which pointed to areas that they felt could be improved. The positive comments included praise for the headteacher's approach, children's sense of safety, the quality of teaching in some classes and good quality pastoral support. Other parents felt that communication was not always good, that teaching did not stretch pupils' thinking, and that bullying and behaviour were a problem. The inspectors agree that some teaching could demand more of pupils, but could find no evidence of pupils being bullied, and they found that behaviour, though not perfect, was good. The level of communication from the school via newsletters, school website and one-to-one meetings was better than found in many schools.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alexandra 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly Agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |    | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | %  | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 67             | 60 | 39    | 35 | 4        | 4  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 64             | 57 | 44    | 39 | 2        | 2  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress   | 45             | 40 | 57    | 51 | 8        | 7  | 1                 | 1 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 34             | 30 | 66    | 59 | 7        | 6  | 2                 | 2 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 39             | 35 | 63    | 56 | 10       | 9  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 34             | 30 | 64    | 57 | 10       | 9  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 42             | 38 | 63    | 56 | 3        | 3  | 1                 | 1 |
| 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) | 45             | 40 | 56    | 50 | 7        | 6  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 36             | 32 | 63    | 56 | 8        | 7  | 2                 | 2 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 38             | 34 | 51    | 46 | 19       | 17 | 1                 | 1 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 34             | 30 | 63    | 56 | 10       | 9  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 61             | 54 | 46    | 41 | 2        | 2  | 0                 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 54             | 48 | 51    | 46 | 5        | 4  | 1                 | 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul> |
| 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.**



11 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alexandra Junior School, Sydenham SE26 5DS

I am writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. Yours is a satisfactory school which is heading in the right direction to become even better.

Here are some of the things we found out:

- most of you try hard and make satisfactory progress. Some of you, such as those capable of doing harder work, could do a bit better at times
- you reach average levels in your academic work, but your writing and investigative skills in science need improving
- your behaviour is good, but sometimes your parents and carers think it could be better. You said that it is good most of the time
- you are good at keeping active at playtimes. Your extra clubs seem really good so keep attending
- the range of things you get to do in lessons is typical of many schools, but your work and links in the local community are good
- your school council help to make the school run smoothly. It sounds like your outside area will look good and I hope you get some more equipment which you said you would like
- the teaching is sometimes good, but the teachers need to stretch your thinking more and make the aims of lessons focus upon your learning
- the school helps you become very tolerant of others in your school and local community, but you don't always know enough about others who live much further from the school.

We have asked the school to do three things to help it improve further:

- give you more open-ended investigative skills in your science work and extra help to make your writing really good
- help staff find more ways of ensuring you learn better and faster in your lessons, particularly by stretching those of you capable of harder work
- make contact with schools much further away from the school so you get to know how other children live and what they think is important.

You can help by trying your best in all lessons and continuing to behave well.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector

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