

Curwen Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102715
Local Authority	
Inspection number	335954
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2009
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Smith
Headteacher	Mr P Harris
Date of previous school inspection	0 October 2006
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 23 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's planning, assessment, policy and safeguarding documents and analysed 135 parental questionnaires.

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

- the progress of pupils of average and below average abilities
- how much the school's assessment information helps pupils understand how well they are doing and what they should do to improve
- how well governors challenge the school.

Information about the school

Curwen Primary and Nursery School is much larger than average. Nine tenths of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, the largest of these are of Bangladeshi and African backgrounds. Over half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of those eligible for free school meals is about double the average and the school has a much higher than usual turnover of pupils. The school holds numerous awards, including the Healthy School Award and Sportsmark. The school occupies two sites. The current major building programme is underway to bring the accommodation onto one site.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Curwen Primary and Nursery School provides an outstanding education. Led by its energetic headteacher, the school displays a restless ambition to do the best for its pupils and everyone who works there is determined that no one should be left behind. The charismatic leadership of the headteacher is fundamental to the school's success. He seems to be everywhere; from being on the playground for parents at the start and end of each day to dishing up school lunches daily. His energy and complete commitment to pupils is infectious and is shared by the senior team and staff. They are also united in their drive for school improvement. Governors are well-informed and offer both excellent support and challenge to the school. Thorough systems ensure pupils' safety and very good links with other schools and organisations enhance and extend what the school provides.

Pupils love their school and their attendance is high. One typically commented, 'this school lets me discover my abilities and helps me to solve my problems and I think this school will lead people to a bright future'. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for. Rigorous systems detect any issues that may be troubling pupils and ensure the necessary support and guidance are provided. Pupils are individually known to many adults and the school's exceptional work to engage families, particularly those who are traditionally hard to reach, helps pupils to grow and flourish. The Sportsmark and Healthy School awards affirm that the school promotes pupils' health very well. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of what it takes to grow up healthily. They relish the healthy school meals available at lunchtime and many take full advantage of the numerous opportunities for sport and exercise.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below those expected for their age. Many have significant language and social issues. The school tackles these barriers with skill and energy. Consistently high-quality teaching and the stimulating and relevant curriculum enthuse pupils and they quickly become independent, self-motivated learners. Very detailed assessment information is used to identify pupils who may need additional support. The high quality of assistance offered to such groups, means that all pupils make good progress. However, boys' progress in some aspects of communication, language and literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage lags behind that of girls. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is average and, given their very low starting points, their achievement is good.

The school's pursuit of excellence is consistent and relentless and has brought about very good improvements since the previous inspection report. Comprehensive self-evaluation, particularly the creative use of assessment information, leads to targeted action to address any concerns. Leaders and managers drive improvement well

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and the school's planning for the future is both relevant and practical.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on and evaluate refinements made to the curriculum and teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage to close the gap in attainment between boys and girls in speaking and writing aspects of communication, language and literacy.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils enter Year 1 with levels of attainment that are below average. Very good transition arrangements ease them into patterns of more formal learning. Challenging teaching and the school's excellent curriculum stimulate pupils' learning and they make good progress in their time in Key Stage 1. Across the school, staff work successfully to overcome barriers to learning and development caused by a high mobility of pupils and their wide range of emotional and social needs. Because of these barriers, the rate of pupils' progress does not fully match the exceptional quality of teaching. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has improved over recent years and is average.

This improving picture is also evident in Key Stage 2. Pupils' attainment has risen steadily in each of the last four years and is currently average. The school's highly inclusive nature ensures that there are no significant variations between pupils of differing abilities or any other groups. Excellent provision, including outstanding care, promotes good progress for all, including pupils for whom English is not their first language and those who have special educational needs such as behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Given pupils' very low starting points, achievement is good.

Pupils enjoy school very much. Attendance has risen in the last three years and is now high. Behaviour at the school is excellent and contributes strongly to good learning. Pupils concentrate well in class and show courtesy to one another and their teachers. They fully understand what constitutes being safe, for example paying attention to potential dangers from traffic as they transfer between the school's two sites in the 'walking bus'.

Pupils contribute positively to the school community and are active in the school council and in taking on numerous other responsibilities, such as buddying younger ones. The local mosque is currently seeking to develop their provision by building on the values and attitudes pupils bring to it from the school. Pupils demonstrate great independence at work and their progress in gaining other vital skills in areas like computing is good. Aided by the strong curriculum, pupils develop excellent cultural understanding and their behaviour demonstrates strong adherence to a moral and social code. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum, teaching and the way the school cares for pupils are closely entwined. All play a significant part in the school's efforts to help pupils thrive, both personally and academically.

The views of both staff and pupils have contributed to the evolution of a skills-led curriculum. It is increasingly focused on pupils' strengths in practical activities. The curriculum is culturally diverse and celebrates the mixture of pupils' backgrounds. For example, each month the pupils learn common phrases from one of the school's community languages. The school recognises that many pupils have very limited experiences of living in London and focuses on delivering a better understanding of their home city to equip pupils to make comparisons with other parts of the world.

Extra-curricular activities are a strong feature and over three quarters of pupils are involved in one or more activities. Practical and sporting activities are highly appropriate, as many pupils' homes have limited outside space. Some clubs involve parents, bringing many into school for the first time. The family bike club has proved very popular. The school has a strong record of success in local and national competitions, notably being the national winner of the national Velodream competition. The 'managed learning environment', a school website, enables pupils to have access to their work at home and pupils can 'and do' support each other's efforts by email.

Support for pupils of all abilities and needs is very well managed and their progress is regularly measured as a result of precise assessment. The impact of interventions to boost pupils' learning is regularly evaluated and influences the deployment of staff and resources. This monitoring indicates that almost all pupils in intervention groups make

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good or better progress. Nurture groups, peer mediation and alert and sensitive pastoral care all help pupils develop socially and academically. Powerful links with outside experts, such as speech therapists, provide pupils with assistance when and where it is needed. Gifted and talented pupils are well provided for. For example, they have links with a London university to raise their expectations and they were responsible for writing the school's very effective anti-bullying policy.

Rigorous monitoring has ensured that teaching is of consistently high quality. Teaching has pace and challenge and motivates pupils who, as a result, show very good concentration, try hard and collaborate very well with one another. From a young age they demonstrate very good maturity and independence. Skilled questioning, such as that seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, improves pupils' speaking and listening skills. A range of grouping strategies, based on accurate assessment, enables teachers to plan work that interests and extends pupils of all abilities. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in classrooms to support learning. For example, Year 5 pupils produced an animated DVD to teach others about healthy eating. Teachers' marking of work is most effective and specifically advises pupils how to achieve their targets. Pupils know their learning objectives and often peer- and self-evaluate to check if these have been reached. They are very clear about the quality of their work and how to improve it. In a Year 2 dance lesson, pupils evaluated each other's work and offered advice about how it could be improved. Regular assessments feed into sophisticated pupil tracking, so any lessening of progress is quickly identified and acted upon.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders monitor the school thoroughly. The sophisticated use of assessment data and frequent classroom visits promote consistency and excellence in teaching. This effective self-evaluation contributes to the school's comprehensive and relevant plans for the future. The headteacher has a profound influence; he is energetic and positive and adopts a 'hands-on' approach which offers an excellent role model to staff and pupils. The very cohesive senior team are always ambitious for the school, setting ever-more challenging targets for improvement. They share with the staff a determination to make a difference to pupils' lives. The school's capacity to continue improving in the future is outstanding. The energy and commitment of the staff to the school's smooth running, avoid any potential difficulties caused by the extensive building works onsite. The school

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provides excellent value for money.

Governors monitor the school very well. They have a good awareness of the school's position. They are highly committed, rigorous in holding the school to account and take numerous initiatives to engage and support the local community. Their good work contributes to the school's excellent standard of safeguarding. Many staff are very well trained and qualified in this area and all are most vigilant. The school holds comprehensive, secure records and has excellent liaison with outside agencies. The extensive onsite building programme is very safely managed.

The school works consistently to break down the potentially insular existence of many of its pupils. The E13 learning federation enables it to provide additional support, such as the family support worker. Other partnerships provide a rich range of experiences for pupils, like poetry and debating competitions. Great efforts are made to engage with parents. Events like parents' evenings now attract almost full attendance in an area that has traditionally been indifferent to schooling. Over 150 parents engaged in the National Family Week events and were very positive in their feedback. The school's pastoral support team frequently engages successfully with families as well as children to help overcome difficulties.

The school's focus on lending support to the local community is one element in its outstanding contribution to community cohesion. It engages constructively with local community groups such as the nearby mosque. Its sensitivity is shown in the provision of clubs before school, so that Muslim pupils who attend the mosque every evening have equal opportunities, as do all others in the school. There are numerous global links with Zimbabwe, the USA, Spain and many other countries.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those expected for their age. Thorough planning and excellent teaching provide children with the correct balance of activities, indoors and out, and happy learning experiences. All adults in classrooms make continuous assessments of how children are developing. These are carefully recorded and ensure that planning is precisely matched to each individual's needs. The high-quality provision ensures that children make good progress, despite considerable linguistic and social barriers.

Children develop a strong respect and tolerance for others. They are active and independent learners. Behaviour is excellent. By the time children move into Year 1, their attainment is better than national expectations in physical development, close to them in communications, language and literacy and below expected levels in other areas of learning. Overall, this represents good achievement. However, there are stubborn gender variations. Specifically, boys do less well in speaking and writing. The school is addressing this issue through changes to the curriculum and teaching, and improvements are underway. Pupils enter Year 1 with excellent learning habits and very well prepared for continuing education.

Most children arrive happily with their parents each morning, showing confidence in their daily routines. Induction arrangements are thorough and home visits ensure that new parents and children have developed close, trusting relationships with staff early in the school year. Children are very friendly toward one another and play well together in pairs and larger groups. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and her staff work very effectively as a team, fully committed to improving children's progress. Monitoring is excellent, using accurate assessments and other observations. There is an excellent emphasis on children's welfare and pupils respect one another, developing a very clear understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Just over a quarter of parents returned the inspection questionnaires. Almost all returns showed strong support for the school and there were no significant concerns, reflecting the school's great success in engaging with parents. One typical comment was, 'my child

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has always been very happy at Curwen. He has grown in knowledge and confidence. The staff and pupils respect each other, which is why I think the school works so well'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Curwen Primary and Nursery 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 135 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 470 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	89	66	46	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	85	63	48	36	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	69	51	56	41	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	44	70	52	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	72	53	62	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	68	50	58	43	8	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	43	71	53	3	2	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)	55	41	60	44	6	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	42	63	47	6	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	44	59	44	6	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	30	74	55	8	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	58	43	71	53	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	79	59	51	38	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.



22 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Curwen Primary School and Nursery, London E13 0AG

Thank you very much for the polite and friendly way you helped the inspectors during our recent visit to your school. You told us how much you enjoy your school. We agree with you that Curwen is an excellent school.

There are lots of good things. You are really well looked after and all the adults at the school are very caring. You help in school through your excellent behaviour and this helps you learn well and make good progress. Well done!

Teachers work hard to make lessons fun and lively and it was good to see you trying so hard. The mixture of things you study is outstanding and is well designed to help you learn and develop. The headteacher is very important to the school. As you know, he is always involved in things and he is very positive, setting a great example to everyone. The rest of the teachers and staff work with him as a strong team to make sure that everything runs smoothly and the school keeps getting better.

Even the best schools can improve. I have asked your school to focus on one area:

- boys in the Reception class do not do so well as the girls in some areas, such as speaking and writing, and I have suggested some things that might help.

It seems as if Curwen is likely to keep improving. You can help by keeping up your excellent attitudes and behaviour. Once again, thanks for all your help. It was great meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

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