

Timbercroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130922
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	341060
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Algar
Headteacher	Ms J Stephenson
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, talked to a number of parents and looked at samples of pupils' books, school safeguarding policies and procedures, the minutes of governors' meetings, self-evaluation documents and the school's tracking and analysis of pupils' progress. Inspectors analysed the responses to 51 questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires completed by pupils in Key Stage 2 and by staff.

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

- How effectively the school is eliminating variations in attainment and achievement between identified groups of pupils.
- The effectiveness of strategies to improve teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in Years 1 to 6.
- How effectively teachers and school leaders use assessment information to build on pupils' learning from one lesson to the next and to target support where it is most needed.
- The extent to which leaders, manager and governors are driving improvement, evaluating the impact of their work and ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Information about the school

Timbercroft is a large school which draws its pupils from a diverse mixture of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. A high proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and almost a quarter speak a home language other than English. Twenty-four different languages are represented in the school. A greater proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities than in most schools and a high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school has an unusually high turnover of pupils. For example, during the last academic year, 67 new children were admitted and 23 left. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery and in two Reception classes. Since the last inspection the school has had a number of staffing difficulties. It has recently been identified as a London Challenge Keys to Success school and is receiving support from a school that is designated a Leading Learner in Education.

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

Timbercroft is a satisfactory school that is showing steady signs of improvement as the new initiatives and strategies to raise achievement start to bear fruit. It has a number of good features. Senior leaders know exactly what needs to be done to improve the school and are tackling its shortcomings with determination and drive. They have already laid some strong foundations. For example, the school is a harmonious and happy community where pupils from diverse backgrounds get on well together and respect and appreciate each others' cultural differences. There has been a significant improvement in attendance as a result of new initiatives. Pupils enjoy school, behave well and are friendly and courteous. They feel safe because the school has rigorous procedures for keeping them secure. Many enjoy the nutritious, home-cooked lunches and participate with enthusiasm in physical and sports activities. The school's warm, welcoming and calm atmosphere, founded on caring relationships between adults and pupils, creates the right conditions for learning.

Recent improvements in the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure that children get off to a good start, especially in learning to read and write and in understanding numbers. Teaching is too variable in Years 1 to 6 and, as a result, pupils' rates of progress are inconsistent. This is because, in a minority of lessons, planned activities do not build well on pupils' previous learning. This is most evident in writing and mathematics, especially for the more able pupils. Teachers do not always make sufficiently rigorous use of pupils' targets to promote good learning. In addition, pupils are not sufficiently involved in checking their own progress in lessons. Although teachers are making increasingly effective links between subjects, there are still too few opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through other areas of the curriculum.

Senior leaders have introduced rigorous systems for tracking the progress of individual pupils and specific groups, for example, through three-weekly progress checks for every year group. These are already helping teachers to focus more closely on meeting pupils' individual needs. School leaders evaluate teaching and learning with increasing rigour, working effectively in partnership with external advisers to improve their own skills. This is helping teachers to improve their practice. Some subject and key stage leaders are still developing their roles and are not yet fully effective in driving improvement or evaluating the impact of the school's work. Governors provide good support for the school but do not yet evaluate the school's performance with sufficient rigour in order to bring about more rapid improvement. The school is poised to build on these solid foundations and has an adequate capacity to continue to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6, especially in writing and mathematics, by:
- ensuring that the more able pupils are always given work that stimulates, challenges and extends them
- building in more opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects.
- Raise the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good by:
- making effective use of day-to-day assessment to plan activities that build effectively on pupils' previous learning
- involving pupils more productively in checking their own progress in lessons.
- Strengthen the school's leadership and management in order to increase the momentum of improvement by:
- involving all key stage and subject leaders in driving strategies to raise attainment and evaluating their impact
- sharpening the role of governors in systematically evaluating the school's performance and providing challenge for senior leaders.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In most of the lessons observed, the quality of pupils' learning and progress was at least satisfactory. Pupils respond well to teaching and their positive attitudes to learning help them to concentrate and work hard. Pupils listen carefully and behave well. In some lessons pupils make good progress because teachers plan tasks that match pupils' different capabilities and build well on their previous learning. On other occasions, the more able pupils find their tasks too easy and complete them quickly. The pace of learning is sometimes hindered because teachers' instructions or explanations are not precise enough. For example, in a mathematics lesson when younger pupils were counting in twos, fives and tens, some thought they were counting the number of coins dropped into a pot while others correctly counted the amount in pence. These misconceptions usually arise because teachers' questions are not phrased carefully enough.

Attainment in Year 6 varies from year to year but is usually close to the national average. It sometimes dips because of the disruptions to learning when high numbers of pupils who join and leave the school during the course of a year. Standards in reading far outstrip those in writing. The school has put appropriate strategies in place to narrow the gap but these are not yet thoroughly embedded throughout the school. More structured teaching of phonics is having a beneficial effect throughout the school and, as a result, pupils now start Year 1 with much higher attainment in reading and writing than in previous years. Too few pupils reach the highest available levels in English, mathematics and science because they are not always given sufficiently challenging work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those learning to speak English, are provided for well. They make at least satisfactory, and sometimes

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good, progress in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Pupils are confident and independent. They work well in pairs and groups and show concern and consideration for those who are more vulnerable. Pupils say bullying is rare and dealt with promptly, but a small minority still express concerns about the behaviour of a few. Pupils are reflective in discussions and have a good understanding of how to resolve conflicts sensibly. They appreciate and celebrate the cultural diversity that exists within the school and the local community. Raising money for charity and understanding environmental issues give pupils a wider perspective on social responsibilities. The school council plays an active role in suggesting improvements, for example in the playground. The Green Team takes responsibility for recycling and keeps an eye on ways to conserve electricity and water.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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?

Teaching is improving but is not yet consistently good enough in every year group to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Most lessons are well planned with different tasks for each group of pupils that build on previous learning. This is less effective for

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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the more able pupils who are sometimes given tasks that are too easy for them. The good lessons move along briskly with clear input from the teacher, careful explanation of what pupils are going to learn, and plenty of time for independent learning or group tasks. In the less successful lessons, teachers sometimes talk to the whole class for too long so that pupils become restless and have too little time to learn at their own pace. In other lessons, teachers do not explain new concepts clearly enough or use language precisely when asking key questions. This hinders pupils' understanding, especially in mathematics. In the better lessons, teachers review what pupils have learned at the end of the lesson and involve them in assessing their own progress, but there are occasions when learning is not consolidated well enough. Generally, teachers' marking is constructive and shows pupils the next steps in learning, although these are not always followed up in the next lesson.

The school is working to create more imaginative links between subjects and to provide a relevant and exciting curriculum that better reflects the cultural diversity of its pupils. This is gradually being introduced throughout the school. A well-planned programme for teaching phonics and reading is giving pupils a better grasp of these basic skills from an early age. The crucial links between speaking and listening, reading and writing are developing but are not sharply identified across the curriculum so that they become integral to learning in other subjects. There are also missed opportunities to develop numeracy and computer skills through other subjects. The school is using appropriate strategies to improve the quality of pupils' writing, such as 'The Big Write', but these have not been in place long enough to have had a marked impact on attainment.

Teachers know pupils very well and provide good-quality care and support to ensure their well-being. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well organised and skilled teaching assistants provide valuable additional support for these pupils in lessons. Learning mentors support pupils well, helping them to resolve disputes. Good support for pupils with behavioural difficulties helps to minimise the disruption to learning for other pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders are ambitious for the school and are under no illusions about the urgency of the need to raise standards. They have created a strong team spirit amongst the staff, who fully support their efforts and vision for the school. Many initiatives are still

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being embedded and have yet to have a measurable impact but they have given a new impetus to kick-start the drive for improvement. The school development plan identifies key priorities for raising attainment but does not always provide measurable criteria by which to judge the success of the school's actions.

Governors have not been sufficiently rigorous in the past few years in evaluating the school's performance and challenging it to do better. Through training and under the leadership of a determined and enthusiastic chair, they are becoming more effective in this role. Thorough checks are carried out on all adults who work in the school and there are robust procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety. Senior leaders monitor the progress of different groups of pupils and take action to address any inequalities. For example, there is a current focus on improving the progress of White British pupils, especially boys, and Black Caribbean pupils. There has been insufficient emphasis on raising expectations for more able pupils.

The school engages well with parents and carers, particularly through face-to-face meetings to discuss their concerns or their children's progress. It offers workshops to help parents and carers understand teaching methods, for example in mathematics, but it is not fully successful in helping them to understand its strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour in school. Effective partnerships with other schools, clubs, sports providers and external agencies do much to enhance pupils' learning and well-being. The school promotes common values and a strong respect for social, ethnic and religious diversity. Through the curriculum pupils learn to challenge prejudice and discrimination and through participation in the local carnival and projects, such as Water Aid, they gain a wider sense of community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision has improved since the last inspection as a result of good leadership and improvements in teaching. Children make good progress from starting points that for many are much lower than expected for their age, especially in language and literacy and mathematical development. Standards have risen steadily over the past three years and are now close to the national average by the time they enter Year 1. Children in both Nursery and Reception enjoy an exciting range of activities that stimulate learning. Many of these are chosen by the children themselves, but are carefully planned to promote learning across all six areas. In one session, some children were wearing hard hats and were constructing a building whilst others wrote out orders for bricks and screws. Carefully-targeted questions developed pupils' understanding of size and shape. Others examined 'babies' in the clinic and discussed what was wrong with them.

New children settle in quickly and happily because the adults make them feel welcome and secure. Regular observation and assessment of children's progress help adults to build up a comprehensive picture of each child's progress. This is used to plan further learning experiences. Good teaching of sounds and letters from Nursery onwards provides a firm foundation for developing early reading and writing skills. Meticulous attention to hygiene and children's safety reflect the staff's commitment to their well-being.

Children thoroughly enjoy the many opportunities for outdoor learning in all weathers. This area has a good number of resources but its full potential for developing all aspects of learning has yet to be realised.

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

Views of parents and carers

Only 14% of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Of these, most have positive views of the school and are satisfied with the care and education it provides for their children. A minority expressed particular concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that the school has rigorous systems for tackling misbehaviour amongst the very few pupils who disrupt learning for others. It is clear that parents and carers do not always understand how these strategies work and senior leaders are aware of the need to make this clearer to all. A

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small minority of parents and carers feel the school does not take account of their concerns or suggestions. Inspectors saw evidence that the school regularly consults with parents and carers and takes account of their views. There are good arrangements to involve them in their children's learning and to keep them informed about their progress, particularly through face-to-face meetings. The school is committed to reaching out to all parents and carers and is aware of the need to continue its efforts in this respect.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Timbercroft 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/inspector received 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 360 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	57	19	37	2	4	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	26	51	22	43	2	4	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	31	28	55	6	12	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	31	27	53	7	14	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	17	33	28	55	3	6	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	33	25	49	8	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	22	32	63	5	10	1	2
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)	11	22	25	49	3	6	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	29	28	55	6	12	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	20	23	45	11	22	5	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	22	24	47	9	18	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	13	25	26	51	8	16	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	37	21	41	8	16	1	2

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Timbercroft Primary School,

London SE18 2SG

Thank you for your warm welcome and for talking to us in such a friendly way during our recent visit. I am writing to let you know what we found when we inspected your school.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. You are well cared for and are developing into confident, well-behaved young people who get on very well with each other and with adults. We were impressed by your knowledge of how to keep healthy and safe and think the school council and the Green Team do a great job in helping to improve the school.

You get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception, but after that you make satisfactory progress in some classes and good progress in others. Your reading is improving well but you do not do as well in writing and mathematics. This is especially the case for those of you who are capable of reaching high standards.

We have asked the people who run the school to improve some important things:

- to help you make faster progress in writing and mathematics, especially those of you who could reach Level 3 in Year 2 and Level 5 in Year 6
- to give you work that builds on what you have already learned and to help you fully understand and check your own progress
- to make sure that they all work together to improve the school quickly by regularly checking how well everything is working.

You can help them by continuing to work hard in every lesson. I wish you every success in the future.

With best wishes.

Yours faithfully

Carole Skinner

Lead Inspector

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