

The Livity School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133440
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	341388
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Lynne Kauffman

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs P Secrett
Headteacher	Ms G Lee
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons and 10 teachers. Meetings were held with the governors, the parents' council, the school council and an additional group of pupils, a representative group of the therapy team, teaching assistants, the School Improvement Partner and the local authority adviser. Inspectors also looked at the safeguarding policy, the folders of school events, newsletters, the vision statement for the new school and 36 parent questionnaires.

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

- how teaching, learning and assessment, which were raised as areas of improvement in the previous inspection, have been improved
- how transition arrangements help pupils move across the school and into secondary school
- whether the links with therapists and health professionals have a good impact on pupils' development and progress
- the impact of the school's outreach developments.

Information about the school

The Livity School was opened in 2001 after the reorganisation of special educational needs in the local authority. On entry, all pupils are working well below the nationally expected levels. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for their communication, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). Over half the pupils have autistic syndrome disorders (ASD). Pupils come from a wide range of cultural heritages. A very high number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Almost half of pupils come from Black African family backgrounds. Numbers of boys exceeds numbers of girls. Over half the children are at an early stage of learning English. The school is hoping to move to its new building in 2012.

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

1

Main findings

The Livity School provides a good education for its pupils. It is a close-knit community of teachers, teaching assistants and therapists who, along with the senior managers, are dedicated to the care and education of the pupils. Parents typically say: 'We love our school, as our children do so well.'

All staff continually modify and develop the provision for learners. Owing to their learning difficulties, the standards reached by learners in all cases are exceptionally low, but they make good progress. Teachers' accurate baseline assessments, involving home visits and input from parents and carers, help to establish the starting points for building the pupils' learning habits and routines. As part of the school's search for excellence, it is planning to trial a programme that will enable it to share and develop a curriculum and compare pupils' progress with those in other special schools.

The curriculum focuses well on basic skills and personal development. The school has used the recommendations from the previous inspection effectively to develop the breadth of the curriculum. The new posts of school improvement leaders have generated vibrant expectations throughout the school. The new middle management team spearheads effectively the drive towards a more creative curriculum with a well-balanced emphasis on personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and themed topics to put all learning into an interesting and relevant context. Within this framework, the curriculum gives well-judged prominence to the communication and problem-solving elements of English and mathematics.

Most pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe, healthy and well behaved. Parents and carers wholeheartedly support the school through their fund-raising and visits to the school. They like the newsletters which keep them informed of any developments in the school. A group of parents and carers have formed an excellent parents' council, to act as a voice for all parents and carers.

Teachers love their craft and nothing is too much trouble. Teachers, teaching assistants and therapists plan coherent programmes of work, then work together to teach subjects in a purposeful and realistic manner. The majority of lessons seen were at least good. Assessment, though used well on entry and for tracking progress, is less effective in identifying the next small steps in learning, especially for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. However, planning has improved from the previous inspection. Assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage has many strengths but the criteria used does not enable staff to identify and record outstanding performance. Transition to the next stage of learning is securely monitored and in some cases pupils integrate into a different setting if more appropriate. Excellent links with local schools

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through the outreach programme, and the supported integration of more-able pupils, is having a positive impact on learners.

The outstanding care, guidance and support are carefully tailored to the needs of each pupil. There are excellent links with a range of therapists and health personnel who ensure that the pupils' and their families' needs receive sensitive support. Reports, individual education plans and annual reviews are thoughtfully coordinated to provide parents and carers with a detailed review of their child's academic and personal development. Parents and carers value the headteacher's open-door policy and her explicit knowledge about every pupil in the school. Excellent safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements; procedures and training in strategies for child protection are outstanding and regularly reviewed.

The headteacher's inspired leadership has made a substantial improvement to the use of the site, with every space used to develop pupils' skills of exploration and independence. Community cohesion is outstanding. It has developed as a vital part of the school's involvement with its community and has been a constant consideration in planning outreach. The evaluation and action planning for community cohesion is used to link with the local and wider community and is central to the school's excellent promotion of equality of opportunity in its rich multicultural setting. The governors' knowledge of and support for the school are excellent. They work tirelessly with school leaders and have helped to create an exciting vision statement to support the development of the state-of-the-art new school. The school's excellent track record of improvement, its rigorous monitoring and planning systems and the drive and creativity of the school's leadership mean that it has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed by September 2011 improvements in the use of assessment to plan more effectively the next small steps in pupils' learning, especially for those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- Ensure assessment and recording in the Early Years Foundation Stage include criteria for outstanding progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

All learners achieve at least well and some make outstanding progress. Pupils work hard, encouraged by effective prompting and encouragement from staff. The variety of activity in lessons keeps most pupils well focused; delighted facial expressions and fluid dialogue from teaching assistants and teachers constantly promotes pupils' progress. Pupils make excellent strides in their personal development as a result of the sensitive attention given to their complex needs and the outstanding care and support they and their families receive.

Most pupils say that they feel extremely safe and can communicate well with staff by using PECS (picture exchange communications), Makaton or their individual body language. Most know they have a special person they can turn to if they are worried or

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unhappy. Behaviour is exemplary because pupils have strong relationships with adults, and pupils are regularly reminded about the school's expectations of behaviour. Most pupils understand their successes through their 'I can' books and records of achievement that map progress. The pupils greatly enjoy school and respond exceptionally well to staying healthy through diet and exercise. Mealtime is an important and exciting time of the day; pupils make excellent choices on the interactive whiteboard in the hall. Tube-fed pupils are fully involved in lunchtime, illustrating the school's excellent approach to equality of opportunity. Pupils enjoy many lunchtime activities, which raise their confidence. They love the exciting play space where they explore and take risks within a safe environment. Within the context of their complex needs, learners make a strong contribution to the wider community; they enjoy planned trips to the shops and to museums. Their involvement in the school community is excellent, for example as members of the school council. Attendance is good rather than high because of the medical needs of a small number of pupils. Pupils are independent within the context of their particular need. Their confidence is remarkable when communicating through Makaton and PECS; some pupils develop good alternative communication skills through computer technology.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding due to the careful support provided by staff. Pupils reflect on issues through prompting and most make an excellent response to their support staff and friends. They understand well the importance of taking turns and sharing, and explore the rich range of cultures in the school through music, art and drama.

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	*
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

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Pupils are well motivated by the seamless approach to assessment and planning used by the teaching teams in each class. An accurate baseline assessment enables teachers to track progress in order to consolidate learning. Well-established systems within the school are working towards adopting nationally respected data analysis programmes that will refine the identification of the next small steps in learning, but this is not yet embedded as part of the school's routines.

Specialist teaching in areas such as dance and drama challenges pupils and contributes to their good progress. For example, a dance lesson in Years 5 and 6 built on the pupils' progress and their collaboration over many lessons. Some pupils who struggle when interacting with others made huge leaps in their personal development in these sessions. Innovative home-grown resources produced with the involvement of therapists are tailored to meet pupils' wide range of complex needs and have a good impact on learning.

Individualised verbal and gestural feedback from teachers and key support staff prompt good learning. Effective use of PECS and Makaton throughout the day, in every situation, ensures flexibility so that pupils can communicate with each other and adults. Good visual, verbal and physical prompting engages most pupils and results in good communication. A consistent, personal commentary on 'good looking', 'good sitting', 'good waiting' and 'good listening' maintains repetitive, consolidating praise to encourage good progress. All staff are diligent in noting any change in attitude or response from individual pupils so that planning can generally be modified on the move.

Curriculum planning focuses well on pupils' needs and interests. The inventive curriculum leads to a wide range of purposeful planning that enriches school life and targets pupils' personal development and well-being. Cross-curricular provision, including literacy, numeracy, PSHCE and thematic learning, is developing well under the new curriculum team. Curriculum enrichment is varied and includes activities such as gardening club; take-up is good and pupils have great fun in learning new skills and eating the end product!

Every pupil in the school is valued. Care, guidance and support are excellent and the school is rightly proud of this aspect of school life. Pupils benefit greatly from the wide range of therapists, health professionals and advisory staff who are linked to the school. For example, this month, the speech and language staff collaborated with the dietician

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to provide an oral tasting workshop which engaged parents and carers and helped to answer any dietary concerns. The expert advice from therapists is very well used in meticulous care plans and in the guidance and support provided for parents and carers through annual reviews and individual education plans. Such guidance has an excellent impact on learning at home. Parents and carers have high levels of confidence in the school's ability to advise them effectively.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Passion, dedication and high expectations are key qualities demonstrated by the senior leadership team and the well-established governing body. Management roles are delegated widely and the high visibility of the senior team ensures that their own role-modelling sets the tone for professionalism across the school. There is a thirst for continuing improvement in all aspects of the school. Observation of teaching and learning by managers at different levels is accurate and a continuing basis for improving practice in classrooms. Monitoring is outstanding because it encourages teamwork, reflection and a drive for professional development that has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The school's managers have developed a well-honed performance management programme that keys into continuing professional development opportunities for teaching and support staff.

Planning is incisive and always focuses on equality of opportunity for all by identifying the explicit needs of each pupil. The school is rightly improving the way in which it uses tracking data to focus on pupils' next learning steps. A minority of pupils follow the route of supported integration into a more appropriate setting, on some occasions into a mainstream placement, showing all levels of need are met.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Pupils are gradually introduced into school over a period to allow them time to become familiar with the new adults and the new environment, as well as to begin to understand separation from their parents and carers. There is a good baseline assessment, involving home visiting, which enables assessment to be made accurately. The approach to assessment within the setting is strong but does not have a full enough range of criteria to establish whether or not children's progress is outstanding.

During the Early Years Foundation Stage, children produce 'I Can' books that allow them to record the milestones of their school career. Staff are well trained in early years education and work hard to prepare an exciting environment to stimulate interest and enthusiasm in the subjects being explored. The pupils enjoy the variety of work that is becoming available.

Most parents and carers remark on the high calibre care, guidance and support offered to their children, to help them understand the pattern of their day, and on their sensitive personal care.

The Early Years Foundation Stage team work hard to prepare their children for the next stage of their education through intense interaction and building friendships. The high expectations of leadership and management ensure teachers and pupils work collaboratively with teaching assistants and other adults to promote effective learning.

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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	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very happy with the provision the school makes for their children. One parent's spontaneous and typical view was: 'This is a fantastic school for pupils and parents.' Of the 36 parent questionnaires returned, a minority expressed a concern. These concerns were followed up and there was no significant evidence to support them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Livity 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 61 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	75	9	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	81	6	17	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	78	8	22	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	58	13	36	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	72	9	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	67	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	64	11	31	0	0	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)	16	44	15	42	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	61	11	31	1	3	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	61	12	33	1	3	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	61	12	33	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	25	69	9	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	72	9	25	0	0	1	3

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



19 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Livity School, Brixton SW2 5DW

Inspection of The Livity School, Brixton SW2 5DW

We could see how much you all enjoyed snack and break times. Some of you liked to play with your friends while others explored the many pieces of apparatus and tried out being really adventurous. We can see that you love your school, as your attendance shows. Your parents and carers are very interested in your school life and some of them have joined a parents' council to help the school get even better, just like your own school council.

Before we left, we asked your teachers if they could do these things to make The Livity School even better.

- Develop the school's assessment of your work to plan the next steps in your learning more precisely.
- Extend the evaluation of the work of the youngest children to let them know when they have done something outstanding.

Very best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Lynne Kauffman

Lead Inspector

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