

Bellenden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100775
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	376454
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2012
Lead inspector	Anthony Byrne

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	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Parkinson
Headteacher	Stevan Borthwick
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 July 2007
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Anthony Byrne

Additional Inspector

Una Maria Stevens

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 15 lessons, observed eight different teachers and held meetings with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. They evaluated pupils' attainment over three years and considered progress in lessons, in pupils' books, as recorded by the school's assessment system and as perceived by pupils and parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, as well as considering 79 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers. The school's self-evaluation documentation, including records of lesson observations and the improvement plan, was taken into account. Documentation relating to safeguarding pupils was checked.

Information about the school

This is an average sized primary school. The school meets the government's current floor standard. There are significantly more boys than girls. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language are much higher than usual. The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is average, but the proportion identified at the higher level of need, school action plus, is higher than usual; speech and communication difficulty is the most common need. A high proportion of pupils enters or leaves the school other than at normal starting and leaving ages. A very high proportion of pupils is known to be entitled to free school meals. The headteacher took up post in September 2010. The school offers a breakfast club, along with other activities after school. Among other awards, the school is designated as a Healthy School.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, but pupils do better in reading and mathematics than in writing. That is now changing and pupils are catching up in their writing due to consistent and informative marking. Pupils’ achievement is carefully tracked by senior leaders and interventions are made when there are concerns. As a result, no groups are falling behind others in terms of progress. Teachers’ secure subject expertise enables them to set out learning clearly and mark accurately. Sometimes teachers instruct the whole class for too long and do not use assessment well enough to plan different challenges and support for pupils that match their different needs and abilities.
- The curriculum has improved, particularly in planning for progress in learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in offering older pupils more varied opportunities for writing.
- The school provides a safe environment. Although a very small minority of parents and carers, and pupils express concern about disruption in lessons, this does not frequently occur and when it does it is of a low level. Pupils are confident that any type of bullying would be promptly dealt with, but say that nothing seriously troubles them.
- Leaders evaluate accurately. With the confident support of the governing body and parents and carers, leadership and management have brought about changes that are rapidly improving the quality of provision and pupils’ progress, especially those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in English by providing more frequent opportunities for older pupils to write at sustained length and by constantly reminding younger pupils to use the knowledge of sounds and spellings they have learned in phonics sessions.
- Throughout the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, use the accurate assessment information gathered to plan learning that allows pupils to get on quickly with independent work that challenges them in different ways according to their needs and abilities.
- Increase the frequency of observations of pupils' learning in lessons by senior leaders to match their regular book reviews to ensure that the clear majority of teaching is consistently good.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with below age-related skills, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make satisfactory progress in Nursery and Reception classes. By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve satisfactorily although attainment, including in reading, is below average

Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve well in mathematics and reach above average standards. In English, reading is above average, but writing is not, although there are strong signs from work seen and from the school's assessments that writing is catching up. Achievement in Years 5 and 6 is good and is satisfactory in other year groups. Usually, lessons are interesting enough to support spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, writing in Year 6 is at its best when pupils are inspired by interesting visits they make, or write poems expressing intensely what they would miss in their own lives if they were to experience evacuation, as many London children did in the Second World War. Some writing, particularly by some pupils who speak English as an additional language, is clear and accurate, but is sometimes too brief to fully extend their skills. Pupils, including those with disabilities and those with special educational needs, and others who speak English as an additional language, make the same satisfactory progress as their classmates. A feature of good progress is how pupils use computers to draft their work. 'Booster' groups additional to lessons help close gaps in attainment between some minority ethnic groups and some pupils known to be entitled to free school meals, and their fellow pupils. Boys generally progress as well as girls. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress from their starting points, supported by monitoring and targeted support. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, pupils receive daily teaching of phonics (letters and sounds) which helps them to recognise and pronounce the sounds letters and groups of letters represent. Satisfactory progress was observed in these sessions. Some

opportunities to remind them of what they are learning were missed at other times.

The vast majority of parents and carers responding to questionnaires expressed positive views about their child's progress. These views reflect positive changes which have been brought about, but progress is most rapid in Years 5 and 6. The above average proportion of pupils who move into the school at other than the usual time of joining settle quickly. A parent of one such pupil comments, 'I feel that my child has made a lot of progress since coming here.'

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory. Parents' and carers' views are that their children are well taught and most pupils share this positive view of lessons. Inspectors find that such views are justified in terms of relationships and subject expertise in the classroom. However, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, particularly using assessment to see that pupils are fully challenged and to organise how pupils work, were observed in some lessons and agreed by senior leaders in joint observations.

Teaching has some strengths. No endemic weaknesses stood out in particular year groups. However, the best opportunities to stimulate writing and 'booster' sessions tend to be concentrated in Year 5 and Year 6 and have the most effect there. Teachers have good subject knowledge but sometimes overuse this in lengthy introductions and this delays some pupils' progress. For instance, in a mathematics lesson where learning was satisfactory overall, the teacher provided many examples of measuring angles. Some pupils did need to be sure about doing it right, but more-able pupils were held back and one said, 'I could have got going earlier and if I got stuck I would have asked.' Despite the negative message there is a positive element in this response showing pupils have confidence in their teachers. It was clear from observation and talking to pupils that a beneficial effect of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is the atmosphere of trust between pupils and staff. Aspects of the curriculum promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, such as writing with sensitivity and depth about visiting the Cenotaph.

All lessons have objectives and criteria for successfully achieving them displayed prominently. When they are clearly stated, this helps to focus pupils' learning. Thorough and frequent monitoring of marking strongly supports learning. It often sets up with the pupil an exchange in writing about individual targets and how well success criteria have been met. However, when planning lessons, very useful assessment information – arising from marking, and from teachers jointly comparing work, and from senior leaders' tracking of progress – is not used often enough. There is a lot of whole-class teaching, instead of organising pupils rapidly to work in groups that can be challenged and supported differently according to their needs and abilities. In the Early Years Foundation Stage planning and activities are better separated and resourced between Nursery and Reception than at the time of the previous inspection. Some parents and carers mentioned how the home/school book gives general ideas about supporting learning at home. However, assessment is not always used precisely enough to provide learning opportunities that meet specific individual needs.

Good practice in using assessment was seen at the end of a Year 5 lesson. Pupils had been working in groups in different ways on the same topic. Pupils from each group were delighted to roll the 'assessment cube'. They then followed the instruction that turned up to share with the rest of the class what they had learned. This brought the class together in celebration of clear gains in learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons and around school including breakfast and after-school clubs is satisfactory. There are good features, especially how different ethnic groups unselfconsciously work and play together. Newly arrived pupils, some of whom speak little English, are provided with a keen volunteer friend to mentor them. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concern about disruption in lessons, but this only occurs occasionally, particularly with younger pupils when the teacher has talked for a long time and it is easily stopped by the teacher or teaching assistant.

When asked about bullying, pupils said it hardly ever occurred in any form. If it were to start, they had confidence adults would soon put a stop to it. Serious misbehaviour is rare. A boy who had been briefly excluded for fighting said, 'It made me not want to do it again – ever.' School policy is that racist incidents would be systematically recorded, but no such incidents have had to be this year or last.

Attendance has improved to average last year and so far is above average this year. Persistent absence has reduced to a very few cases which are being addressed. A breakfast club is well organised and clearly enjoyed by pupils who attend. School lunches and plenty of equipment and opportunities for healthy exercise contribute to pupils' well-being.

An assembly performance in German, one of the curriculum languages, used props and gestures well to tell the familiar story of 'Hansel and Gretel'. As well as entertaining, it celebrated speaking languages other than English, a feature of the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher with the full support of senior leaders and governors has brought about significant improvements. He has established thorough, accurate self-evaluation, including rigorous analysis of performance data that has reversed a declining trend in results since the previous inspection.

Effective systems of marking and tracking of pupils' progress were introduced that are improving writing particularly. These systems are now established and their consistent use demonstrates that staff are united in supporting senior leaders. Parity of achievement between different groups, including pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is secured through effective tracking of progress to

determine where intervention is needed to support learning. Improvements have been made in planning and resourcing in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although the recently appointed coordinator has recognised the need for more precise use of assessment in planning learning experiences for individuals. Significantly improved attendance is increasing pupils' chances of success. The governing body is confident that administrative and safeguarding matters that caused concern have been put right and inspection confirmed their views. Members of the governing body now have good communications with senior leaders that have enabled them to challenge the school to make improvements. Frequent internal and external monitoring reviews, fully reported to the governing body, indicate that most aspects are improving. Strategic planning is firmly based on these reviews and determines clear next steps. Frequent monitoring of pupils' work in books has established consistent and effective marking. However, while the accuracy of senior leaders' judgements of achievement and teaching was confirmed in lessons seen jointly with inspectors, observations take place less frequently and have not had as much impact on the quality of teaching throughout the school. The school's capacity to demonstrate improvement is demonstrated by the range of changes already securely made. Parents and carers are supportive of these changes and a minority wrote comments about how the school involves them. One parent captured the common view that the school has reached on its journey of improvement thus: 'The new headteacher has had a lot of work to do to make things better but so far he has made a huge difference and I feel optimistic for the future of the school.'

Success in closing gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils, alongside the harmonious ethos of the school demonstrates equality of opportunity for them. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. The school has developed systems of safeguarding that meet requirements. The curriculum is well planned to capture pupils' interest and supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in lessons and through other experiences as exemplified in their responses to the play, *'War Horse'*, and their eager participation in clubs.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



9 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bellenden Primary School, London SE15 4PF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for the help you gave us in forming our views. Bellenden offers you a satisfactory standard of education. You like being at school. You bond together there very well. You like the changes that the governing body and staff have helped the headteacher to make. You feel safe at school from any type of bullying. If it did happen, you know how you would get help. Misbehaviour is rare and quickly stopped by teachers or assistants.

You try hard to reach learning goals set in lessons. You are doing best in reading and mathematics. You are improving in writing because teachers mark your work very thoroughly. You can write very well about a range of interesting topics and visits, but sometimes you do not write enough to practise all the skills you are being taught. A good feature is that you trust your teachers and know you can always ask for help.

We know you feel that the school's senior leaders are doing a good job of developing your school. We have asked senior leaders to make sure of the following to keep your school going in the right direction.

- Give you have lots of interesting opportunities to write. Younger pupils should be reminded often to use what they know about letters and sounds, and older ones should write more about the chosen topic.
- Teachers should use the accurate assessments they make to plan for you to work more independently in ways that suit your individual needs and abilities.
- Senior leaders should help them by looking at your progress in lessons more often, in the way that they already regularly review your books.

Yours sincerely
Tony Byrne
Lead Inspector

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