

Ashmole Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100556
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	285823
Inspection date	28 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Steven Hill

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 on roll	
School	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms C Holland
Headteacher	Mr J Parr
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001
School address	Ashmole Street London SW8 1NT
Telephone number	020 7735 2419
Fax number	020 7735 5554

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school, with a Nursery, serves a multi-ethnic inner-city community. The largest ethnic groups represented are of Black African or White British origin, with substantial numbers from Caribbean and other White heritages, and several from a range of other backgrounds. There is a wide socio-economic mix but, overall, pupils' social circumstances are much less favourable than average. A high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is above average. There has been very high staff turnover since the last inspection, and a major building programme. Children's attainment, when they start in the Foundation Stage, is well below that found in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ashmole is an outstanding school. It is a harmonious, multicultural community where pupils flourish academically and socially. Achievement has risen over several years and is now outstanding. Standards are average by Year 6, and this represents extremely good progress in the light of the low attainment on entry, particularly in mathematics and English.

Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage, because of the wide range of exciting activities provided, the great care and support they get from adults, and the high quality of the teaching. They make great strides in their personal, social and emotional development. However, standards at the end of Reception are still low because of children's very low starting points.

Pupils throughout the school do very well, regardless of their ethnic origin, first language, gender or ability. A key factor in this is outstanding teaching and learning. Teachers have high expectations and set work that is challenging but manageable for all the pupils. Excellent relationships ensure a positive working atmosphere in lessons. Pupils' high achievement is also supported by the careful and thorough tracking of their individual progress in English and mathematics, which enables the school to ensure that they get any help they need. At the moment, all the analysis of progress is undertaken by the headteacher, and class teachers are not sufficiently involved. This limits their insights into the detailed progress being made by their classes.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, because of the excellent pastoral care provided. The school is alert to pupils' needs as individuals and consistently develops their self-esteem and their moral and social understanding. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils have developed into mature, caring and thoughtful young people who work hard and take a pride in their accomplishments. They have very positive relationships with each other and with staff, and their behaviour is excellent. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and know how to keep safe. They are extremely well prepared for their future lives, in education and beyond.

The high quality of education rests on firm foundations of outstanding leadership and management. Strong direction from the headteacher and senior managers ensures a common approach from the staff team. Teaching is monitored carefully and staff are given clear feedback on how they can improve. This has been very effective in raising quality. The school has rightly, and successfully, concentrated its efforts on raising achievement in English and mathematics. However, leaders of other subjects have had only limited opportunities to monitor exactly how well pupils are doing, or the detailed provision in different classes. This limits their ability to use their expertise and direct help where it is most needed.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the care it provides. Their views were summed up by those who simply wrote 'We as parents are pleased to know that our son is in such a wonderful school.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve class teachers more in the analysis of pupils' progress.
- Enable subject leaders to get a clearer picture of provision and standards in their areas of responsibility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is excellent. Pupils start with very low standards overall and reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards at the end of Year 2 are generally below average, and in 2006 were particularly low. This was because about half the pupils in this group had learning difficulties or disabilities. Records show they make good progress in the light of their starting points, and that the current pupils in Year 2 are making very good progress. Progress accelerates across Key Stage 2 and the achievement of Year 6 pupils in 2006 was in the top 2% nationally. Their standards in English and mathematics were above average. Their progress in science, while good, was not as strong and the school is taking effective action to address this. Similarly, a relative weakness in writing compared to reading is being addressed very effectively through a concentration on pupils' speaking and listening skills. This, rightly, continues to be a priority for the school. Pupils learning English as an additional language learn English rapidly and do as well as everyone else.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. One pupil said 'Everyone helps each other and are kind to each other.' Year 6 pupils are very aware of their responsibilities, particularly towards younger children. One explained this by saying 'This school is like a huge family.' Pupils have a very good understanding of moral and social issues; they have taken on board the school's 'core values' and try hard to live up to them. They have a strong understanding of different cultures because the school draws extensively on the range of cultures within the school. Pupils show respect for the views of others, listen to each other carefully, and work well collaboratively. They thoroughly enjoy school and learning, and work hard. Pupils contribute well to the community, both in school, in the local area, and beyond. Boys and girls from different ethnic groups and of different ages play and work together happily. They are proud of their school and were keen to make sure the inspector knew this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers are very successful in engaging pupils' interest through the enthusiasm they convey and the exciting and varied things they prepare for pupils to do. One pupil said 'Our teacher is funny and encouraging and has lots of energy'. And another that teachers '...make learning exciting and make us want to learn more.'

Teachers are very good at planning work that is carefully matched to pupils' individual needs, particularly in English and mathematics. Classes are managed very well, lessons have a good pace and a lot of ground is covered in a short time. Teachers make excellent use of the highly skilled teaching assistants, particularly to help pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities, or who are new to learning English. This strongly underpins the very good progress they make. This year, teachers are giving pupils increasingly effective opportunities to talk about their work before they write, and this is helping raise standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum, which is well matched to the needs of the pupils. It is particularly strong in literacy and numeracy, and in personal, social and health education. A good start is being made in linking different subjects together to enhance pupils' learning. The school makes extensive use of the facilities available in London, such as museums, and of help from other local schools, for example in providing sports coaches, to enrich the curriculum. The range of clubs and other extra-curricular activities has been limited by the recent building work, and the school plans to extend these next term, in the light of consultations it has held with pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are excellent. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully so that they receive work that matches their needs, and are given the help they require. This is a major factor in their excellent achievement. Pupils are given a very clear understanding of how they are doing, and are keen to accomplish the goals that teachers set. They all have targets to strive towards, although some younger pupils are a little vague about how this process works.

Pastoral support is outstanding. Staff take great pains to ensure that pupils are happy, safe and secure in school, and are expert at promoting pupils' social and moral development. Procedures for safeguarding learners are all in place. The school's care for their children is greatly appreciated by parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the quality of education is excellent, and pupils achieve extremely well. The strong emphasis on pastoral care means pupils' personal development is outstanding.

The headteacher gives an excellent lead to the school's educational direction and is very well supported by effective senior managers and a dedicated team of staff. Outstanding self-evaluation underpins the school's success. Rigorous systems to analyse provision and outcomes have led to the high quality of teaching and the resultant improved achievement, particularly in mathematics and English. This is not as strong in other subjects, and the school is considering how this can be improved. The school works hard to develop effective links with parents, and has been very successful in this.

Governors have a good understanding of the school and its work, and are able to act as a 'critical friend' to help it move forward.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and the school is very well placed to build on its strengths in the future.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your help when I visited your school. I had great fun talking to you and watching you at work and at play. You were all convinced that Ashmole is a good place to be and I could see why. I think it is an outstanding school. This is why.

You all make excellent progress because your teachers are so good at helping you to learn. The adults keep a very careful eye on how you are all getting on, especially in English and maths. They make sure everyone gets challenging work, as well as any extra help they need. They also try hard to make sure you are happy and know how to behave. The headteacher works very hard to sort out all the results of assessments, and he does this very well. However, we have agreed that the other teachers are going to help him with this in the future, so that everyone knows more about what is going on.

I was very impressed by your behaviour and by how well you get on with each other. You work hard and are right to be proud of your school, and of how well you are doing.

The headteacher, governors and other adults are excellent at organising the school, and try hard to make it even better. To do this, we have agreed that teachers who are in charge of different subjects should have more chances to find out how things are going. This will help them to give each other tips, on how to help you learn even more.

I enjoyed meeting you all the other day, and hope that you carry on working hard and enjoying school.

Best wishes,

Steven Hill. Lead Inspector.