

Hitherfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131824
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	315875
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Raminder Arora

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	442
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Hooberman
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Ashley-Jones
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Hitherfield Road Streatham London SW16 2JQ
Telephone number	020 8769 8428
Fax number	020 8677 8857

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school with a Nursery and off-site Children's Centre serving a diverse neighbourhood of a wide socio-economic mix. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is high, and a significant number are refugees or asylum seekers. Around three quarters of all pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and just under half speak English as an additional language, with many on early stages of learning the language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. These are mainly behavioural, emotional and social disabilities. A considerable number arrive and leave during the year. The school has achieved a Healthy School's award, Reading Connects status, and more recently the Active Mark. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hitherfield is a good school. The words of one parent are echoed by many, 'we couldn't wish for a better school'. Every child matters in this school and this focus is central to all that the school does. The excellent leadership of the headteacher ensures that pupils make good progress and that their personal development is outstanding.

Teaching is good and tasks are well matched to individual pupils' needs in most lessons. This is a significant reason for the good progress made by pupils. The outstanding curriculum further supports pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Children start in the Nursery with skills that are below expectations for their age. They make consistently good progress through the school and leave with standards that are broadly average by the age of eleven. Results of national tests for eleven year-olds have fluctuated in the past. The above average results of 2006, showed a decline in 2007. This was mainly due to a higher than usual number of new arrivals with lower prior attainment in Key Stage 2. The school's current data on progress indicates that pupils in Year 6 are making much better progress and are on line to meet the school's challenging targets. Pupils' achievement in writing has been identified as the weakest aspect and various measures for teaching reading and 'talking partners' have accelerated pupils' progress. Substantial attention is paid to monitoring pupils' achievement, and strategies are quickly put in place to tackle any potential underachievement. Assessment information is well used to set individual targets and to make sure that pupils know what they have to aim for next.

Pupils are confident and enjoy school immensely, 'My daughter wakes up excited about the school every day', commented one parent. Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well. They take on responsibilities as school councillors and peer mediators, which contribute to their growing maturity and prepare them well for life in future. Pupils understand the need for healthy diets and exercise, and actively participate in an extensive range of sporting activities on offer. Pupils from all backgrounds work and play in harmony, and this contributes to the school's warm family ethos. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported exceptionally well and particular attention is paid to supporting the needs of vulnerable pupils. The school works closely with parents and specialists as well as the teaching assistants who are trained well to support them. Strategies such as 'buzz partners' provide them with opportunities for discussion and collaborative working. Staff know pupils well. Their teamwork and positive relationships are key in making all pupils feel very special and safe. Parents and pupils really value the high quality care. One parent wrote, 'What I love most about the school is the warm, friendly and inclusive feel'.

Leadership and management are good overall. Planning for school improvement shows clear priorities, for example, the continuous focus on improving the quality of teaching, which has consequently improved and is mostly good. Governors play an effective part in overseeing the work of the school. Procedures for self-evaluation and review are good. An especially strong feature is the partnership with other schools and many other beneficial links established with the community. The strong links with local schools enable smooth movement between schools. The issues from the last inspection for example, raising the levels of attendance and punctuality and strengthening support for pupils new to English, have been successfully addressed. This has underpinned their good progress in not only learning English but also doing well in their other subjects. The school has a good track record. The pace of improvement has quickened

since the arrival of the new hardworking and innovative headteacher. The school's capacity to improve still further is excellent.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There is good provision in the Foundation Stage. The staff plan stimulating activities for the children and ensure a good start to their education. The learning environment is inviting and resources of good quality are well used. The space both outdoor and indoor is quite restricted due to the new building works, but well utilised. Teaching and learning are good and children make good progress as they move through the Foundation Stage. In the less effective lessons, while the activities are practical and well organised, they are not consistently matched to individual children's needs. The on-going observations contribute well to children's individual portfolios of what they know, do and understand. The early introduction of strategies to link sounds and letters prepares them well in learning how to read and write. Children start at Nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding, which are below those expected for their age. By the time they join Year 1, they have reached the early learning goals in personal social and emotional development and in mathematics. This reflects good achievement. The information collected is used particularly well to ensure that the least able and most vulnerable settle in well. There are numerous support facilities to help vulnerable children and their families, including the family reading groups and learning mentors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, particularly in writing for all pupils.
- Ensure that all teaching is as good as the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well through the school. Standards by the end of Year 2 are below average and writing is relatively the weakest compared to reading and mathematics. In Year 6, the most recent results of 2007 in English, mathematics and science are below average compared to the previous year when they were above average. This was because one third of the pupils taking tests had joined at different times in Years 3 to 6. The current standards have improved to broadly average, and given pupils' starting points this represents good progress. At this key stage there is a tendency for girls to do less well than boys, particularly in mathematics, and this is being effectively tackled by the school through successful introduction of fresh approaches to teaching numeracy. Pupils who have learning difficulties make exceptionally good progress as a result of the high quality support provided by the well experienced and very skilled support staff. The vulnerable, as well as those learning English as an additional language receive expertise support and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well being-are outstanding. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent. Pupils show a keen interest in learning and develop an appreciation for music, art and languages from lessons, visits and concert performances. They are currently working with the British Film Institute and hugely enjoying these cultural experiences. Pupils know the importance of a healthy life style and keeping safe. Their behaviour

is good, although there are a larger number of exclusions than is usually seen. The school has robust systems for encouraging good attendance. As a result of vigorous efforts by the school it has improved and is now satisfactory. Throughout the school, pupils make a strong contribution to their community. They are proud of their school and confidently voice their opinions through the school council. The school has excellent procedures and strategies in place to help pupils understand their feelings and to raise their self-esteem. This is seen through the work of the learning mentors and the excellent way in which adults help pupils to express their emotions. Pupils are well prepared for the future, because they have excellent personal and social skills, and make good progress in acquiring literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

'I am consistently reminded of the dedication of the staff who encourage hard work, respect, creativity and fun,' wrote a parent. Teaching is good overall and sometimes outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers plan a good range of learning experiences that excite and motivate pupils who make good strides in their learning as a result. The most effective teachers use skilful questioning to draw out ideas from pupils; as seen in a Year 6 lesson where pupils were effectively engaged and excited about learning through a practical and challenging activity about fractions. All teachers establish a strong rapport with pupils and this generates a secure environment where pupils can investigate and try out new ideas with confidence. Teachers enable pupils to enjoy learning by adopting a wide range of methods and using interactive whiteboards effectively. Support staff play a very significant role in helping and guiding pupils of all abilities and as a result they make good and sometimes excellent progress. In a few lessons where teaching is less effective, the work is not matched well enough to the different abilities of pupils, the pace is too slow and expectations are not high enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent and enriched curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, and drives the many and varied activities that engage them in their learning. It encourages them to cooperate very well and motivates them to meet challenging targets. Consequently, teachers work hard to ensure that pupils have many opportunities to apply the skills they are taught. Care is taken to ensure progression and consistency in the way work is presented. There are very good links between subjects that enable teachers to plan exciting learning opportunities such as the study of the 'highway man' linking, literacy, drama, art and craft activities together. Learners have excellent opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as peer mediators, school council and being 'VIPs' for the day. The curriculum is enriched through the many extra-curricular activities that are on offer for all ages, and through visits and visitors such as the English National Opera and the Philharmonia Orchestra who work with the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A parent, who reflects the views of many, wrote, 'We feel that the school is a safe, nurturing and inspiring environment, which values every child and respects their individuality'. The staff provide outstanding care for all including vulnerable pupils. The school has a strong commitment

to the well-being and personal development of pupils, and the quality of pastoral care is accordingly excellent. Relationships between pupils and staff are exemplary and this contributes significantly to pupils' achievements. Staff are trained to be alert to possible child protection issues, and take effective action. The school has developed excellent partnership with outside agencies to promote pupils' well being. Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. Risk assessments relating to the school premises and excursions are thorough. The school has well-established procedures to track pupils' progress and information gained is used effectively to set challenging targets for improvement, which are well used to help pupils take responsibility for their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school at all levels are good. The headteacher provides an inspirational leadership. Parents greatly admire him with comments such as, 'strong leader with a very clear vision', 'always about and very approachable'. The headteacher is well supported by a committed senior leadership team. Self-evaluation is good and involves all senior managers. Analysis of performance data is rigorous and its use for continuous improvement to standards is good. Senior leaders are currently engaged in developing the role of the middle managers as experts in their subjects. The links between improvement strategies and pupils' progress are well focused in the school development plan, for example, continuous emphasis on improving writing across the school. The governors provide good support and are becoming more involved in the day-to-day life of the school. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and act as effective critical friends.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hitherfield Primary School, London, SW16 2JQ

On behalf of the inspectors I would like to thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at all your work. We think your school is good.

Here are the reasons why:

- Your school is welcoming and much liked by parents and pupils.
- You enjoy coming to school and attend regularly.
- You make good progress because your lessons are good.
- You enjoy the excellent extra-curricular activities available for you.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on well with each other and teachers.
- You listen carefully to your teachers and you are willing to work hard.
- You learn to work and play well together and to look after yourselves.
- Everyone at school takes excellent care of you, so that you are safe and happy.

Your headteacher, class teachers, and all of the other staff who help run your school, are keen for you to get the best education. We agree with the targets they have set to make your learning even more enjoyable, and we are confident that you will help the school to meet them.

There are two things that we think would make your school even better:

- We have asked the headteacher, governors and all staff to work even harder to help you to improve your writing, so that you can get to much higher standards in English, and I am sure you will rise to this challenge!
- The teachers are going to ensure that all their teaching is even better and as good as the best, to enable you to always do well in your work.

Everyone at Hitherfield School can work together to do these things. We hope that you will continue to enjoy all the things you do, which help you to learn and be happy.

With best wishes

Raminder Arora

Lead Inspector