

Richard Cobden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100022
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	323213
Inspection date	5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	443
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Barr
Headteacher	Mrs Kathy Bannon
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Camden Street London NW1 0LL
Telephone number	020 7387 5909
Fax number	020 7380 1518

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- What are leaders and managers doing to stem the decline in standards in KS1 and to bring about sustained improvement?
- Does the teaching in each key stage have a direct correlation with achievement and progress?
- What are the strengths in curriculum, care, guidance and support, and personal development?

Evidence was gathered from the analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with pupils and discussions with teachers, a governor and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children from three to five years of age. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average and increasing year on year. Most pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and are learning English as an additional language. The proportion identified with specific, behavioural and emotional, speech and language difficulties is very much higher than average and has increased significantly in 2008. The percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is higher than that usually found.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The parents are overwhelmingly supportive and are very happy with the work of the school. This is because Richard Cobden provides an outstanding education for its pupils. The dedicated, tireless work of the headteacher and her team of senior leaders ensure that the pupils are at the heart of everything they do, because every child really does matter in this school. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6, which represents excellent achievement from pupils' very low starting points. Learners meet and exceed highly challenging targets. Most pupils make excellent progress. Those with specific behavioural and emotional, and speech and language difficulties make exemplary progress because their individual education plans set highly challenging targets. Provisional results at the end of Year 6 indicate that attainment has risen in 2008 for the third year in a row. Standards in English and mathematics are higher than at any time since the previous inspection. Although there has been a decline in standards at Key Stage 1, this is clearly linked with reducing levels of skills on entry to the Nursery, with many more at the early stages of learning English. The school spends a great deal of time ensuring that pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop the basic language and social skills they need to cope with their learning. They do this well and progress really begins to accelerate towards the end of Year 2.

The shared vision of the senior team and governors is a key feature of the school's success and facilitates the improvement of the life chances of each pupil. This promotes and contributes exceptionally well to the outstanding personal development of all pupils. Children enjoy school very much and behave extremely well both in and out of classrooms. Attendance remains below average but, thanks to the sustained efforts of the school, it has improved since the last inspection. There is still work to be done to ensure that the poor attendance of a significant minority improves. Pupils feel very safe and secure and the school provides many opportunities for them to eat healthily. They understand that their participation in the many sporting activities on offer helps them to lead a healthier lifestyle. There is an effective school council, whose members have helped to bring about change within the school. For example, they have been instrumental in school improvement projects and have presented assemblies to promote the new playground equipment and to encourage children to use the school library effectively. Children make a positive contribution to the wider community. For example, they have raised money for charities and have taken responsibility for themselves and other children through buddy schemes.

The rigorous monitoring of the work of the school is meticulous and is based on the philosophy that 'only the best will do'. Teaching is observed regularly and areas for improvement are linked clearly to further training. There is no evidence to suggest that teaching is better in any particular year group. It is equally impressive throughout the school. Pupils are given responsibility for their own learning and this enables them to grow into confident young people who are keen to learn. The impact of the school's actions to raise standards in writing and mathematics is evident in each classroom. Much improvement has been achieved because teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and have a real skill in motivating and encouraging less positive learners. They make the learning interesting by organising engaging activities and make good use of information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils enjoy learning new skills and learn quickly how to apply these to improve their work. For example, in one lesson pupils were introducing animations into their multimedia displays. The teacher's demonstration was so effortless that pupils were highly confident and could not wait to emulate their teacher. This

was one reason they made such excellent progress and achieved so very well. Marking is regular and written, and verbal feedback ensures pupils know what level they are working at and what they should do to improve.

The curriculum is outstanding and contributes well to the enjoyment of pupils. A topic-based approach and highly creative teaching ensures that pupils achieve very well, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Linking the literacy curriculum to topics is making learning more purposeful. Pupils are eager to learn and sustain interest for long periods. The curriculum is enriched well by an excellent range of visits and visitors. Discussion work generated by these activities ensures that those pupils whose first language is not English achieve well. Pupils are given many excellent opportunities to participate in the life of the school through extra-curricular clubs and curricular events. The discipline and teamwork required for participating in school sports teams is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour in class. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn French and excellent opportunities are provided for them to develop their skills in ICT.

The provision for care, guidance and support is outstanding, with assessment and academic guidance being very strong. The system for tracking pupils' progress is easy for staff to use and effectively pinpoints those in need of more support. This has had a real impact on raising standards. Effective help is provided for those pupils at an early stage of learning English and with learning difficulties. Consequently, these pupils make as much progress as their classmates. Pupils know and understand their targets and are clear about what they must do to achieve them. Pupils know who to turn to if they have any problems and know that things will be dealt with effectively.

The school has worked hard to develop very effective links with the local and wider community. Strong links have been developed with private organisations to provide further support for pupils' welfare. The school provides 'Family Learning Centre' courses, consisting of workshops and advice to parents/carers within the community. This increases parent/carers confidence and involvement and supports the development of pupils and their families. Provision of community language classes, after school, supports pupils in learning their first language. It also gives families confidence that their children have access to activities that deepen their understanding of their cultural heritage. Opportunities to help pupils to value differences arise in all areas of the curriculum. This encourages pupils' understanding of diversity, not only within the local community but in the United Kingdom, Europe and globally.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with low levels of skills, particularly in language and personal development. They settle quickly and become happy and confident learners. The school's procedures for assessing children's skills and understanding when they join are new and are helping to track their progress through the Nursery. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these systems, particularly on children's language development. In Reception, children respond well to good teaching and make good progress in their understanding of letters and sounds. Stimulating mathematical activities help them to develop number and logical thinking. Good assessment strategies linked to where children would 'wish to be' ensure they understand what they have to do next, as well as give them a target. The personal development of children throughout the EYFS is outstanding. Teachers look after children very well and promote their social and emotional learning effectively. Self-esteem and a sense of community are evident in class routines such as circle time and story sharing. Praise, simple rewards and celebration of personal goals help to support growing independence. Provision in the EYFS is well led and

planning is very effective in promoting children's skills and understanding in all areas of their learning. Children make good progress throughout the EYFS, but the levels they reach remain below average by the time they enter Year 1 because of their generally low starting points.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate the tracking of progress in the EYFS in order to consolidate language and skills and measure improvement.
- Improve attendance through the focused follow-up of persistent absenteeism.

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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
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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 learners' needs?	1
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

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

18 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Richard Cobden Primary School, London, NW1 0LL

We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour when we visited your school recently. We found you to be polite and courteous both to adults and to each other. Thank you very much indeed for the warm welcome you all gave us. We enjoyed our time with you very much because we saw many excellent things. That is why we think your school is outstanding.

We were pleased to learn that you take an active part in making decisions in your school. We were pleased to hear that your concerns relating to playtimes are brought to the attention of your teachers. You have done a good job in improving the quality of playtimes by helping to provide more equipment. You all like the playground buddy system, which has helped to make children feel happier and safer at playtimes. This is highly commendable; well done! We saw lots of your excellent work on display in your school. We were particularly impressed with your very high level skills in ICT. The standards you achieve are as good as they are in most schools. You make outstanding progress to reach these standards.

Your teachers do an excellent job. They prepare interesting, lively lessons for you to take part in and have helped you to improve your writing particularly well. Your headteacher, her deputy and other senior teachers also do a fantastic job. They work very hard to ensure that you all achieve as well as possible. We have asked them to try to improve attendance and you can help with this. It is important that you always come to school whenever you can. If you don't, you miss important learning. We have also asked your headteacher to ensure that the very youngest children are watched closely so that they learn to read, write and speak as well as possible and so that they develop into confident young people.

Once again, thank you for making our time in your school so enjoyable.

Yours faithfully

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector