

Garden Suburb Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101282
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	323438
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Burdis HMI

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	270
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	Dr Helena Mullins
Headteacher	Ms Sarah Sands
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Childs Way Hampstead Garden Suburb London NW11 6XU
Telephone number	020 8455 8198
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Garden Suburb is a large infant school situated in a conservation area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than usual. The majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and for almost half, English is not their home language. About a third are at an early stage of learning English. The attainment on entry is varied, but broadly average overall. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to national figures. Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children aged four to five years consists of three Reception classes. The school has achieved several awards including the Activemark and Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The children at Garden Suburb Infants get a very good start to their education. Very effective procedures for introducing children to school life successfully promote happy and effective learning. The school's curriculum is creative and well taught and as a result, pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well.

A clear vision and principled approach to managing learning for young children underpins the effective leadership of the headteacher and the staff team. There is good capacity for further improvement. Since the school's last inspection in 2005, the focus on developing writing skills has improved standards in writing. The school has moved forward in other areas too, for example in promoting healthy lifestyles and securing sufficient good quality physical activity. The headteacher and governors took decisive action to develop a system for recording and tracking how well pupils are doing. This performance database is used well to inform school priorities within the school development plan.

Pupils consistently attain well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Children enter the Foundation Stage with a range of abilities and make good and sometimes very good progress as they move through the school. A major strength is the school's teamwork. Staff work to provide a nurturing and stimulating learning environment where pupils can develop their social skills and reflect on how well they think they are doing. Within a well-structured and safe environment, they learn to work and play happily together. They talk confidently about their work and are always well behaved and welcoming to visitors. They confidently express their views and contribute to group and class discussions. However, they are not always sure of what they have to do next to improve their work. Staff are consistent in reinforcing the correct way to behave and reminding pupils of the agreed class or playground rules in being kind and thoughtful to each other. Inspectors are largely in agreement with the positive views of the vast majority of parents who are delighted with the work of the school. As one parent put it, 'My child has made fantastic progress both educationally and emotionally. The school does a wonderful job.' However, the inspectors share the concerns of the few parents who feel their children are not always given enough challenging work to do. This affects the achievement of some higher-attaining pupils.

The curriculum is highly effective in engaging all pupils and meeting their needs. It is impressively creative in its design. The school capitalises on its rich cultural diversity and promotes community cohesion effectively, with some parents making a very valuable contribution to a programme of planned activities. The staff work hard to make learning and play spaces safe and attractive. Governors give good support in ensuring statutory requirements are met, and provide good challenge to the work of the school.

The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is realistic and largely accurate. However, whole-school targets are insufficiently challenging to extend pupils' attainment to the highest levels.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents are overwhelming in their praise for the Early Years team and the support given to their children at the start of their education. There is a happy and purposeful atmosphere where all children demonstrate good levels of confidence in their relationships with adults and other

children. Routines are very clearly established and children behave very well due to adults' clear expectations. Teaching is well planned and based on imaginative activities that motivate and excite children to want to learn. As a result, the children achieve well. For instance, after 'dancing with delight' during a physical education lesson, they were able to explain how warming up makes your heart beat faster. Many activities engage pupils for long periods as they become engrossed in what they are learning. Teaching assistants play a very important role by supporting children with specific learning needs, and those with English as an additional language, effectively and sensitively. Occasionally, teachers do not expect enough of some children, especially in relation to their early writing skills, and the pace of work is not always challenging for higher-attaining pupils. Good use is made of the outside area to enrich and extend what children learn. The new staff team is well managed and effective monitoring by the Early Years Foundation Stage leader identifies areas for further development. For instance, staff are developing good systems for checking how well children are progressing, using more regular assessments to inform progress, set targets and inform future planning. Children progress well, so that by the end of the Reception Year many achieve a good level of overall attainment, especially in personal, social and emotional development and mathematical development. Their achievement in communication, language and literacy is more varied. While most achieve well in reading and in using language for communication and thinking, they achieve less well in the areas of writing and linking sounds and letters.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the level of challenge and aspiration in whole school targets.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to use and apply their emerging writing skills in Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Plan greater challenge within activities for higher-attaining pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Current data illustrates that pupils enter Year 1 with a good level of overall attainment. Evidence from books of pupils in Year 2 and work in classrooms show that they make good progress from their starting points in science, mathematics and reading, although some pupils could achieve more if more challenge was incorporated into planned activities. The school's analysis of attainment and progress of different groups, for example the different achievement of boys and girls in writing, leads to targeted action and effective involvement of pupils in their own learning in order to raise achievement. An individualised approach ensures pupils with English as an additional language experience a rich language environment and they quickly achieve the knowledge and skills to engage fully with learning. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress with support from well-structured programmes and adult support. Pupils achieve very well in developing their knowledge and skills in subjects such as art, music and dance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Promotion of pupils' personal development is outstanding and central to the school's vision for raising achievement. Pupils learn to respect and care for each other because they are encouraged to be thoughtful of others' feelings. They develop very good social skills and

understand the difference between right and wrong. A very good awareness of Britain as a diverse society develops because of the school's successful approach to valuing and celebrating the breadth of cultural backgrounds represented. Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the value of healthy eating and the importance of going out to play to get exercise. There are good opportunities for them to contribute to their school community, including making suggestions for the content of the curriculum. Members of the school council enjoy their responsibilities and they have been successful in fund-raising events, including buying bins for their playground. Their behaviour is consistently outstanding in lessons. During the inspection older pupils played happily and productively with younger ones in playtime activities. Pupils develop very good literacy and numeracy skills that equip them well for the future. Almost universally, parents report that their child enjoys school. This enjoyment is evident in pupils' attentiveness and high levels of engagement in activities provided. However, attendance is below the national average. The school's analysis illustrates that this is largely due to ill health.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their learning because they are encouraged to express their opinions, explore their ideas and ask questions in a secure and supportive learning environment. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning are achieved through the excellent relationships with adults and the variety and range of learning activities. Teachers make excellent use of a stimulus theme or topic to excite and interest children in carefully planned learning. Specialist teachers in music, physical education and religious education extend and challenge pupils' knowledge and skills. All pupils, particularly those who find learning more difficult, receive high-quality support from teaching assistants. Those with English as an additional language experience a rich language environment and they quickly gain confidence in using English to extend their learning and work with their peers. Occasionally the pace of learning is not sufficiently brisk to extend the higher-attaining pupils. For example, opportunities to encourage pupils to apply and extend writing skills are missed. Teachers actively involve pupils in their own learning and encourage them to assess how well they think they have done. Clear marking and discussion helps them to understand whether they have met their learning objective. Clear learning targets are established for pupils of different abilities in each lesson, although pupils spoken to during the inspection were not always aware of what they have to do next to improve their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

One of the features that stands out in this school is the way the curriculum is planned to be exciting and interesting for all pupils. It stimulates an enjoyment of learning and lays down good foundations for their future. Teachers provide a challenging curriculum that involves creative exploration of topics and themes around a core book, visit or painting. Excellent opportunities for all pupils to take part in music, art and drama enrich the curriculum. Pupils are excited by their learning and eager to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Links with the local community and parents are good. They are actively encouraged to come into school to share their expertise. High-quality displays around the school enhance the learning environment. The school successfully promotes knowledge and understanding in relation to how to stay healthy and keep safe. It has achieved the Healthy School Award and in 2008 was awarded the Activemark for a second year in recognition that the number of pupils participating

in at least two hours physical education each week is above average. There is a strong culture of inclusion and the curriculum is appropriately planned to meet the needs of all groups. Regular opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts and feelings about things that are important to them are effective in promoting self-esteem and an awareness of others' feelings.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Procedures for care, guidance and support are very effective. This is seen in the commitment of staff to ensure pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and experience settle happily into school routines. The school provides a very high level of pastoral care, so pupils feel secure and happy in their relationships with staff. Assessment systems inform pupils' learning targets and increasingly pupils are involved in discussing and agreeing the next steps in their learning. Very good support provided for those with additional learning needs ensures they are included fully within class settings. Teaching assistants effectively implement specialised programmes designed by outside agencies, such as speech and language therapists. Careful consideration is given to the needs of children who enter school with little or no spoken English. The Special Needs co-ordinator has established a highly valued and effective parenting programme to provide additional support to families who want it. Procedures for safeguarding, including child protection, are fully in place and regularly reviewed. The school promotes health and safety well and arrangements are backed up by clear and agreed policies. Many parents reported how they value the ease of access to teachers and how sensitive and responsive they have been in meeting academic or emotional needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by her leadership team. The clear focus on promoting pupils' involvement in learning and an innovative and exciting curriculum play an important role in driving up standards. With a shared vision and clear roles and responsibilities, all members of staff make an active contribution to the management of the school. Consistent and focused approaches to monitoring different aspects of provision inform plans for future improvements. The leadership team has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a clear school improvement plan sets out the actions for further development. However, the plan does not make it clear what impact the actions are to have on pupils' achievements, making it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of new developments. Senior managers and middle leaders regularly observe colleagues teaching and provide clear guidance to promote good and excellent teaching. The whole-school performance targets are not always sufficiently challenging; for example, many more pupils achieve higher levels in the end of key stage tests than the school predicts, suggesting that teachers underestimate what pupils can achieve. Good systems, recently introduced to track pupils' progress, are being used well to illustrate trends in performance and identify specific areas where additional work needs to be targeted. Work is ongoing to secure accurate teacher assessment to underpin the target-setting process and ensure the school can confidently illustrate its impact on pupils' achievement over time. The governing body fulfils its role effectively. For instance, it is currently reviewing the school's anti-bullying policy in response to the findings of a recent survey that revealed many parents were unaware of the school's arrangements. The school has established good community links and productive partnerships

with other agencies such as health services. There are appropriate strategies to monitor and follow up absences, but greater rigour is required in analysing trends in absence to inform action for further improvement.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	1
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	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 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

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

11 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Garden Suburb Infant School, London, NW11 6XU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. It was lovely to talk with you and to see how much you enjoy school. I can see why your parents are so pleased that you go to Garden Suburb Infant School because it is a good school. I am writing to tell you what we found out while we were with you.

- You all do well in your work and reach very good standards by the time you leave. We think this is because of the good teaching and very interesting activities teachers plan for you to do.
- Your behaviour is terrific. We could see how well you all got on together and were impressed with the way the older ones help younger ones in the playground. Well done everyone for being so kind and thoughtful.
- You know what are the right things to eat and drink to stay healthy and you get plenty of exercise during the day - the dance lesson looked particularly energetic.
- All the staff take good care of you and they give you help when you need it.
- The people in charge of your school are keen to make things even better. You make a good contribution through the school council by letting your teachers know what you think could improve.

You are very good at deciding how well you are doing, but you don't always know what your target is - we have asked your teachers to look again at this so you are sure you know what you have to do next to achieve even more. Those of you who find your work easy should be encouraged to use your writing skills more often to record your ideas.

Keep on enjoying school and making the most of all those exciting and interesting activities.

Yours faithfully

Kathryn Burdis

Her Majesty's Inspector