



Muswell Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 131871
 LEA Haringey LEA
 Inspection number 293869
 Inspection dates 6 December 2006
 Reporting inspector Mr Steven Hill

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

Type of School	Primary	School address	Muswell Hill
School category	Community		London N10 3ST
Age range of pupils	4-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8444 8488
Number on roll	418	Fax number	020 8444 2615
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of Governors	Ms T Goldblatt
		Headteacher	Ms J Hughes / Ms A Squire
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection Date(s)	Inspection No.
4-11	6 December 2006	293869

(c) Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge or in prescribed cases on payment of such fee as they think fit (not exceeding the cost of supply), to any person who asks for one.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a large, popular primary school in a suburban area of North London. About half the pupils are of White British origin, with the rest coming from a wide range of other ethnic groups. An increasing number of pupils speak English as an additional language, currently three times the national average. Pupils' social and economic circumstances are fairly wide ranging and are slightly above average overall. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average, although the proportion with statements of special educational needs is above average. Attainment on entry varies but is broadly in line with that in most schools, although children here tend to have good speaking skills. The school has two headteachers who share the role, working three days per week each and over-lapping on one day per week.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Standards are high and pupils' achievement is outstanding. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding because of the excellent pastoral care provided. They feel safe and secure in the happy, positive learning environment.

The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are now good. Recent improvements have ensured that, by the end of the Reception classes, children's attainment is above the national average in all areas of their learning.

Teaching is good overall; there is a good proportion of outstanding teaching and some that is satisfactory. The excellent progress that pupils make is because this teaching is backed up by exceptionally good provision to track how well individuals are doing. The resulting information is used very effectively to tailor provision to pupils' needs, both in ordinary lessons, and through a wide range of different intervention programmes. The support given to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is particularly good, so their progress is much greater than would be expected. Excellent use of the very skilled support staff is a major factor in this. Similarly, the care with which the school checks how well bilingual pupils are doing, and the subsequent provision, results in their rapid progress in learning English. Standards are exceptionally high by the end of the school in English, mathematics and science. High-fliers do well, with a large proportion of pupils exceeding the expected level for their age.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, behave extremely well and work hard. They have excellent relationships with each other and with staff, and contribute very effectively to the school community. Their extremely positive attitude is a major factor in the high standards achieved. By Year 6, they are lively, thoughtful, responsible and sensitive young people, who are extremely well prepared for secondary school and for their future lives.

The curriculum makes very good provision for art and music, as well as for the basic skills. The orchestra gives pupils excellent opportunities to develop their musical talents, for example, a pupil in Year 6 said 'Teachers try hard to make learning fun' and another added that 'They are usually successful!' Lessons are well paced and tasks are almost always matched closely to pupils' different needs. The few lessons that are only satisfactory usually happen when this is not done so well.

The school is so successful because of the outstanding leadership and management. The two headteachers work closely with the senior management team to give clear direction to the school. This is rooted in a thorough analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. The outstanding tracking of individuals' progress and the rigorous monitoring of assessment results and lessons give a clear oversight of just what is happening. The increased involvement of subject leaders in this has led to improving provision across the board. All the staff work together as a very successful team to address any issues that arise. The school is always looking to improve, and senior managers have already identified that there needs to be a greater provision of interactive whiteboards, if the new government recommendations in the 'Primary Strategy' are to be implemented successfully. The school has improved substantially since the last inspection, and is very well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

Although there are no substantial weaknesses, the inspector agrees with the school that in order to build on its success it should concentrate on:

- supporting teachers to reduce the number of lessons that are only satisfactory, drawing further on the expertise of subject leaders;
- obtaining more interactive whiteboards, so that the new elements of the Primary Strategy can be implemented efficiently;
- implementing current plans to improve provision further in the Reception classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are well above average and achievement is excellent. The trend over the last few years has been upwards.

Children now exceed the national average in all strands of their learning by the end of Reception. They achieve well during the Foundation Stage.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are usually significantly above average at the end of Year 2. An apparent dip in results, in the national assessments in 2006, was due to the relatively low starting points of this group. The school's detailed records show that these pupils achieved well during their time in Key Stage 1, and exceptionally well during Year 2, when the school put in specific provision to address the needs of individuals.

Excellent progress throughout the older classes results in high standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. In national assessments, a very large proportion of pupils attain above the expected levels, and few fail to reach them. All pupils achieve extremely well, regardless of their starting points, because of the school's careful match of provision to individual needs. This is true of boys and girls, those from different ethnic groups, bilingual pupils and those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' excellent attitudes, behaviour and relationships strongly support their academic progress. They really enjoy school, throwing themselves into their work with enthusiasm. By Year 6, they have excellent collaborative skills, and work together well. They are confident learners, able to express their opinions clearly and to engage in polite but rigorous debate with each other and with staff. They have a good understanding of cultural issues through very good provision for art and music, for example. They celebrate and appreciate the cultural and ethnic diversity in the school, and are keen to say that bullying and racism are very rare, and always dealt with very well by the school. The view of a boy in Year 6, who summed up in a meeting by saying 'It's a cool school', was typical.

Older pupils are very responsible, and keen to help younger pupils through being 'playmates'. These posts are keenly sought after and pupils' application forms reveal their sensible, mature understanding, and a caring attitude to others. Pupils also contribute very well to the school community through such things as selling fruit at playtimes, acting as football referees, and through the effective school council.

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, take part in sport enthusiastically, and make an effort to eat sensibly. Attendance is average and improving, after recent effective work on this by the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and a significant proportion of lessons are outstanding. Relationships are good and teachers' expectations are high of work and behaviour. As a result, pupils work hard and behave very well. In the vast majority of lessons, there is a good pace and work is carefully matched to pupils' needs, based on the excellent assessment information available. Teachers develop pupils' collaborative skills very well, often using 'talking partners' for pupils to sort out and clarify their ideas. They work hard to make tasks interesting and pupils really enjoy lessons. They take a pride in their accomplishments and those of their classmates. A major contribution is made to learning by the skilled support staff. This is particularly true of pupils who have statements of special educational needs, who are helped sensitively to take a full part in lessons, and whose progress is much greater than might be expected in the light of their difficulties. A few lessons are only satisfactory, often when the match of work to different pupils' needs is insufficiently precise, or when opportunities are missed, for example to develop pupils' ideas through discussion.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Very good provision to develop pupils' basic skills is matched by good attention to creative work, particularly in art and music. Some of the results of this can be seen in the high quality of performance by the school orchestra, and in some artwork on display. The exceptional work in the style of Monet by pupils in Year 5 and the giant 'London Skyline' pictures, to which all pupils contributed, demonstrate this. The curriculum in the Reception classes is good, and has improved recently, particularly in the outdoor provision. A good balance is drawn between work with adults, and opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves.

A good range of visits and visitors enhances the curriculum and supports pupils' learning and enthusiasm. Pupils in Year 6 were particularly keen on their residential visit to the Isle of Wight, which they said had really strengthened their friendships and independence, as well as being extremely enjoyable.

The use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning is well established, but not all classrooms have interactive whiteboards. The school has identified that this will slow down their implementation of the new elements of the 'Primary Strategy'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding feature of the school's provision which strongly supports pupils' excellent personal development and achievement. The very thorough tracking of the progress of individuals and groups is used very effectively as a basis for meeting their needs, both within class and in terms of extra support provided. Pupils are set clear targets for improvement in English and mathematics and understand these, often checking their own progress against them.

The school has made extensive provision within all elements of the government's 'Every Child Matters' agenda. These underpin the very strong pastoral care and support for pupils. They are kept safe and their views are sought and acted upon both individually and collectively, for example through the school council. Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility and are taught about healthy lifestyles. Collaborative work is promoted very well. Very good relationships ensure that pupils are confident that any problems will be quickly sorted out by the staff. The school works hard to consult parents and to involve them in their children's education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership and management are responsible for the many strengths in provision and the resultant outstanding achievement and personal development of pupils. This is based firmly on excellent, accurate self-evaluation. Extensive tracking of pupils' achievement and careful monitoring of all aspects of the school's work mean there is a clear view of relative strengths and weaknesses. Senior staff are meticulous in checking on any apparent shortfall and analysing the reasons for them. All staff then work very effectively as a team to address any issues.

The management structure meets the school's needs effectively, with the two headteachers and senior management colleagues dovetailing their work efficiently. They ensure that all staff understand the school's priorities and support them well in putting plans into practice.

The role of the subject leaders, a weakness at the last inspection, is now a developing strength, with monitoring of provision and standards in all subjects improving steadily. This is contributing to the good quality of teaching and helping to improve the already good curriculum, by enabling the sharing of subject expertise.

The governors have a very clear understanding of the school, which helps them challenge and support professional colleagues well, contributing very effectively to the continual improvements which the school seeks.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A to the inspection report

Inspection Judgements

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

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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	1
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

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Annex A to the inspection report

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	1
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 interest of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Annex A to the inspection report

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 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	1
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 to the inspection report

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

15 December 2006



Dear Pupils

Muswell Hill Primary School, Muswell Hill, London, N10 3ST

Thank you for your very warm welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed my day, particularly talking to you and watching you at work in lessons. I thought the performance by the orchestra and the soloists was brilliant. You all told me how good you think your school is and I agree. It is outstanding.

You make excellent progress because you work very hard. The teaching in the school is good and you told me that lessons are fun. The school has really good systems to check on how you are doing, and makes sure that you get work that is just right for you.

All the staff look after you very well and make sure you are safe and happy in school. I was very impressed by how well you all get on together and how sensible and friendly you are. The behaviour I saw around the school was excellent. I was particularly pleased to see how caring the older pupils are, and how well they help look after the younger ones.

You are lucky to have two really good headteachers who, with the rest of the staff, help to organise the school so well. They get some very good help from the governors.

There is not much that needs to change in your school, but I have agreed with the teachers that they will try to make the teaching even better, so that even more lessons are exciting and fun. They are also going to make some improvements they have already planned in the Reception classes, and to try to get interactive whiteboards for all the classrooms.

You can all help by carrying on working hard and helping each other. I hope you all keep on enjoying school and making such good progress.

Best wishes,

Steven Hill
Lead Inspector