

Benthal Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100260
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	395297
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Ruth McFarlane

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 of pupils on the school roll	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy Adams
Headteacher	Tim Hunter-Whitehouse
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2009
School address	Benthal Road London N16 7AU
Telephone number	020 8985 9310
Fax number	020 8533 6003
Email address	office@benthal.hackney.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	25–26 April 2012
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M1 2WD

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Introduction

Inspection team

Ruth McFarlane

Additional Inspector

Tusha Chakraborti

Additional Inspector

Raymond Prentice

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 27 lessons or part lessons, taught by 15 teachers. Over 12 hours of inspection time was spent looking at learning. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, listened to pupils reading and looked at safeguarding arrangements, development planning and records of pupils' progress and achievement held at the school. In addition, they analysed questionnaires from 154 parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Benthall Primary is a larger school than average, in which a much higher proportion of pupils than usually found are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is high and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is almost double the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is higher than in most schools, although the proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The governing body manages before- and after-school care at the school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school, where the warm and welcoming ethos supports and encourages pupils' all-round development. The school is not outstanding because there are some inconsistencies in teaching and planning, and in the leadership of subjects, that limit pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' achievement is good. From low starting points, their progress is good throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6, although attainment in mathematics is slightly lower than that in reading and writing.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers make clear what pupils will learn and check their understanding. Occasional shortcomings in planning lead to lack of challenge and variety of task, and slow pace. Pupils are sometimes not given enough guidance to take responsibility for their learning or understand how to reach the next level. Teachers' marking is good in literacy, but is less effective in mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. Pupils thrive in the caring atmosphere. Consequently, they enjoy school and generally feel safe there. Pupils show considerable respect for each other, and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Leadership and management are good overall. The governing body supports senior leaders well and offers effective challenge. Systems to track pupils' progress have developed well recently, but this information is not yet used consistently in the classroom. Leaders monitor staff performance carefully and use the outcomes to target further improvements through well-focused staff training. However, middle managers are not given enough opportunities to check their subjects through the school. A good curriculum and strong partnerships help the school to provide good, enriching spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences. Not all opportunities are taken for pupils to use and apply mathematics skills in other subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the summer of 2013, ensure all teaching is at least good and a higher

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proportion is outstanding, and that this is reflected in pupils' progress, especially in mathematics, by:

- improving teachers' planning to increase the pace and challenge of lessons and to include more variety of task matched to the different abilities in the class
 - ensuring that planning includes plenty of opportunities to promote pupils' mathematics skills across a wide range of subjects
 - improving teachers' written marking in mathematics to match the high quality evident in literacy.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
- using the good pupil progress tracking information more effectively to set individual learning targets to help pupils take responsibility for their learning
 - enabling middle managers to gain a better overview of the aspects for which they are responsible.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils make good progress and achieve well because teaching and the curriculum are good. This substantiates the views of parents and carers. In Key Stage 2, in previous years, pupils entered in Year 3 with low attainment. Good progress is now evident throughout this key stage and the school as a whole, so that attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6, slightly weaker in mathematics than in reading or writing.

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities well below those typically found. They now enter Year 1 with broadly average standards, which have significantly improved over the three years since the previous inspection. Consequently, standards have now improved to average by the end of Key Stage 1. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 respond well to improved teaching of phonics (linking sounds with letters). Firm foundations lead to standards in reading in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2 that are securely average and rising further. Pupils respond well to encouragement to develop good reading strategies. In a typical Year 6 lesson, pupils read fluently, discussed story plots and knew that their understanding is helped by note making, marking texts and asking questions.

Pupils enjoy lessons. They settle quickly to work and respond well to the good teaching that stimulates their learning. They enjoy being actively involved in finding things out for themselves and respond positively to challenging activities. A typical example was in Year 4 English, where pupils demonstrated high levels of contribution, cooperation and participation encouraged by skilful, fast-moving teaching, in understanding the key features of advertisements. In the few lessons that move more slowly, pupils' progress slows as pupils wait patiently to be allowed

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to start activities. Overall, all groups of pupils are helped to learn well, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, all minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. These groups make good progress because the school identifies their needs accurately and provides effective support. As a result, gaps in performance of different groups are narrowing. Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals now achieve above similar pupils nationally.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is most consistently good or better in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where a range of highly engaging activities captures children's imagination, allows them to investigate for themselves and moves their learning on quickly. For example, in an activity in a Reception class that mixed literacy with numeracy, and enhanced children's knowledge and understanding of the world, children enthusiastically constructed 'cages' for wild animals such as giraffes and lions using appropriately sized 'fence poles'. They shared views and opinions in deciding what kind of enclosures would keep the animals safe, understanding language such as longer, shorter, narrower and wider. They answered questions about 'one more' and 'one less' and made rapid progress, counting and comparing the number and types of poles used. Strong teaching of linking sounds and letters helps children make rapid gains in reading and writing. Imaginative use of the outdoor area stimulates their creativity and physical development.

In the rest of the school, teaching is mostly good. Teachers explain clearly to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. They plan effective opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, including research, role play, games and investigations. Teachers and teaching assistants interact well with pupils to support them in their learning. In the few less effective lessons, teachers' planning focuses too heavily on the teacher recapping previous work or explaining the lesson. This leaves too little time for pupils to get on with tasks matched to their abilities and delays the support from teaching assistants to help disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, this group of pupils is generally well supported through individual education plans and within the classroom so that, overall, they make the same good progress as other groups.

Pupils are sometimes not sure of the level of their work or what they need to do to take their learning to the next level because target setting is inconsistent across the school. Marking is used well in literacy to tell pupils how to improve their work, but in mathematics a more cursory approach often results in less helpful rows of ticks. The planned curriculum makes a good impact on learning, especially in reading and writing. Work on topics such as the Second World War develops pupils' understanding of local history and geography. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop and practise mathematics skills across a range of subjects, such as, in open-ended activities, investigations and problem solving. The teaching of personal, social and health education is well organized, effective and provides good opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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Almost all parents and carers are of the view that their children are taught well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' good behaviour has a positive impact on their learning and leads to their good progress and achievement. Pupils are polite to adults, respectful of each other and their school surroundings. Almost all parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaires agree that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school, although a significant minority of pupils in their questionnaires said that behaviour is only good 'sometimes'. Inspectors investigated this view thoroughly. Exemplary behaviour was sometimes evident in lessons observed during the inspection and around the school. The school's records of behaviour over time and discussions with many pupils during lessons, at break times and more formally in group discussions, showed that behaviour is typically good and that bullying in any form is uncommon. Pupils learn about various forms of bullying, such as name calling, prejudice-based bullying or cyber bullying, through their good personal and social education programme and through special events such as an annual anti-bullying week. Most pupils agree with their parents and carers that they feel safe in school and know that teachers and other adults in school will help with any problems if they arise. Pupils particularly appreciate the praise system which encourages them to achieve well, work hard and develop teamwork and social skills.

Pupils respond to the school's relentless efforts to improve attendance and this has shown a sustained improvement to reach a broadly average level. The school council is proud of actions it has initiated to improve aspects of school life, such as leading assemblies and improving the environment, including the school gardens. These have won competitions for being the best educational gardens in the local area.

Leadership and management

The school's leaders and the governing body make a good impact on improving pupils' achievement and promoting the importance of pupils' all-round development. Robust analysis ensures a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring of teaching and learning highlights the right priorities for improvement. This has led to effective action to tackle weakness, including well-targeted professional development, identified through thorough staff reviews. This track record demonstrates the school's capacity for further improvement. However, the school is aware that middle leaders are not fully involved in this process, which limits their overview of their subjects across the school. As a result, although the good curriculum promotes personal education and basic skills well overall, mathematical skills are not developed fully through a wide range of subjects. This, and the relative weakness in marking for this subject, has led to slightly weaker performance in mathematics throughout the school. However, there is a coherent and systematic approach to teaching reading with a balanced emphasis on letters and sounds, comprehension and, as pupils become more proficient, opportunities to analyse character and authors' use of language and plot. Effective partnerships promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well. Some of these support

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pupils who have a range of learning, emotional and behavioural needs, and their families. Other partnerships, with local schools, provide opportunities in music and sport. Before- and after-school care is satisfactorily managed and provides worthwhile additional support for those pupils who attend.

There are good procedures that analyse pupils' attainment and progress and identify groups and individuals who need additional support, although this information is not yet used consistently in the classroom, for instance to set pupils' targets or make sure activities are precisely matched to ability. Pupils' good progress is testament to the school's clear commitment to equality of opportunity and effective systems to enable pupils to be successful. The school tackles discrimination firmly. Safeguarding procedures meet the current government requirements. The governing body supports the school well and provides a good level of challenge through comprehensive processes of monitoring and evaluation.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Benthall Primary School, London N16 7AU

Thank you for making the team so welcome when we inspected your school. Thank you also to those of you who responded to the questionnaire. We particularly enjoyed talking to you about your school and your work.

You go to a good school and you make good progress. By the time you leave, you are doing as well as most other children of your age. In mathematics, you do not do quite as well as in reading and writing. We noticed how polite you are, the care you show for one another and how well you get on together. Your school takes good care of you so that you feel safe. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers, your lessons, lunchtime and after-school clubs and visits.

Your teachers often make learning fun, especially when lessons move quickly and cover a range of different activities that make you think hard. Your headteacher and the governing body know how to make the school even better. In order to help you reach even higher standards and make faster progress, I am asking your teachers to make sure that:

- things speed up in slower lessons so that you are always busy learning, with tasks and activities that make you think hard and are just right for you
- you are given more tasks that help you to practise mathematics skills in lessons in other subjects
- teachers' marking in mathematics is as helpful as it is in your literacy books
- all the information that teachers have about how well you are doing is used better in class to help you understand how to get to the next level in your learning.

I am asking the governing body and headteacher to ensure that all those staff with responsibilities for different subjects can join a bit more in the checks on how you are doing and how well you are being taught. You can help by continuing to do your best. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth McFarlane
Lead inspector

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