

Primrose Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100020
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	323212
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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)	409
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	Ms Brenda Stones
Headteacher	Ms Jane Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Princess Road London NW1 8JL
Telephone number	020 7722 8500
Fax number	020 7722 5291

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Primrose Hill is much bigger than most primary schools. Most pupils live some distance from the school. A large majority of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. The largest group of these pupils are Kosovan, and their first language is Albanian. Over 140 pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties is well above the national average. The school has an exceptionally high turnover of pupils. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery, which children attend on a full-time basis, and two Reception classes. The school has gained the Healthy School Award and Sports Activemark.

There is childcare provision onsite which consists of a breakfast club and an after school club that are not managed by the governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school has made across-the-board improvements since the previous inspection and now provides an outstanding education for its pupils. It has a large number of significant strengths. In particular, pupils' achievement, in both their academic and personal development, is outstanding. Parents are almost unanimous in their support of the school and many rightly commented on the welcoming nature of the staff, and on how well their children succeed. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are much below those typically found. Excellent progress is made in all year groups, which leads to average standards at the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, standards are significantly above average, and on occasion, such as in mathematics in 2007, are exceptionally high. All groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well.

The excellence of the leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff has been pivotal to the school's many improvements. The leaders' aim of ensuring that all pupils feel safe and secure at school is met and surpassed. Pastoral support is excellent, with all members of staff ensuring that pupils are helped to enjoy school and learning. The remarkable ability of the staff to ensure that all pupils are included in everything the school has to offer characterises the deep and clear commitment to equal opportunities. The staff are particularly skilled at ensuring that the many refugee and asylum seeker pupils in the school are quickly helped to integrate and this is testament to the school's outstanding care. The outstanding and rich curriculum boosts pupils' enjoyment of learning. Following careful evaluation of the curriculum, there have been many successful changes in its organisation. Evaluation showed that there was a need to make the curriculum more meaningful by linking subjects together and strengthening the opportunities for pupils to learn from first-hand experiences. In consequence, themes and topics have been developed that capture the pupils' interest and imagination because learning is made real. There has also been a marked improvement in teaching and learning. The school's emphasis on strengthening pupils' learning is paying dividends because almost all teaching is good and many lessons are outstanding. Lessons are under-pinned by excellent relationships and behaviour management by teachers who enable all classrooms to have a calm and purposeful atmosphere. They are adept at ensuring that the tasks presented are exciting and are matched very well to the differing learning needs present in each class. In consequence, pupils of all abilities make excellent progress.

A number of pupils have particular social and emotional development needs and these are provided for exceptionally well. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. By the time that they reach Year 6, almost all pupils act in a mature and responsible manner and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils enjoy school, have positive attitudes and behave well. Excellent provision enables them to make a strong and positive contribution to how the school is organised and run, with school councillors proudly pointing out how they have made a difference to the school's environment. Attendance remains below average for similar schools and although there has been some impact in lifting the attendance of persistent absentees, rates of attendance are not sufficiently high.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children settle quickly into the daily routines of the class as the school makes very effective links with parents, including home visits. In addition, parents say that they value the opportunities they have to share their

children's learning at home. Children enter the school with skills and abilities lower than expected, particularly in language, communication and thinking and many children are at an early stage of learning English. They make an excellent start in the Nursery and achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning because the provision is highly effective. From a low starting point, they achieve outstandingly well, reaching the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. A very stimulating curriculum and high-quality care and a secure environment support them exceptionally well and contribute to their outstanding personal development.

Thorough and accurate planning ensures that the differing needs of the children are met and activities planned indoors and outdoors, in both the Nursery and Reception classes, promote skills in all areas of learning very effectively. Teachers place an appropriate and strong emphasis on teaching basic skills in order that children become confident readers and writers. Through stimulating topics children thoroughly enjoy role play as a travel agent or a tourist on a coach trip, developing their speaking and listening skills very well. Assessment and tracking of progress are systematic and consistent and obtain a clear view of children's strengths and weaknesses in all areas of learning. This information is used exceptionally well in planning future activities. The leadership and management of the provision are very strong. The staff work closely and effectively as a team and all share a deep commitment to securing children's learning and their personal and social development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review procedures for reducing absence to ensure that all possible avenues are explored to improve rates of attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress throughout the school and, by the time that they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. In the past, progress was more limited in Years 1 and 2, which resulted in standards being at the national average at the end of Year 2. However, this is not now the case, with current Year 2 pupils attaining standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Those pupils who find learning hard make excellent progress due to the extra help they receive. The many pupils who arrive at different times in the school year soon settle in, and quickly progress at the same rate as their classmates. The school's many refugee and asylum seeker pupils make particularly good progress due to the expertise of the staff who ensure that these pupils achieve as quickly as their classmates by tailoring lessons to meet their needs. In all year groups, higher attaining pupils achieve very well and this leads to an above average proportion of pupils gaining the higher level at the end of Year 6. Standards in art and music are much above expected levels due to the rich and diverse curriculum, which is supported by excellent teaching in these areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school because it offers them excellent care and many stimulating activities, making learning fun and helping boost their self-esteem. Pupils say that they feel safe and even pupils who are new arrivals to the school quickly settle and say that they are well supported by staff. Attendance is below average and, although improving, it remains a concern because levels of attendance are below those of schools in similar circumstances.

Pupils have a clear sense of sympathy for people who are less fortunate than themselves. They enjoy raising money to support charities such as the Bangladeshi cyclone and the Burmese and Chinese disaster appeals. Pupils' cultural development is excellent, promoted through subjects such as English, art, history, geography and religious education. Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of why it is necessary to stay fit and healthy, and this is reflected in the school gaining the Healthy School Award. Pupils are prepared well for their move to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils learn rapidly because teaching is consistently at least good, and much is outstanding. Teachers have very strong subject knowledge, which helps them to present lessons confidently and give clear explanations. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in physical education, music and drama. Teachers use many different methods to make lessons interesting and involve pupils in their own learning. They encourage them to assess their own achievements and identify exactly where they need to improve. Lessons move briskly so that pupils' interest is captured and maintained. The last inspection noted that the more able pupils were not sufficiently challenged, but this is no longer the case. Lessons are planned well and take very good account of pupils' different needs. Teaching assistants play a valuable role, supporting pupils who have behavioural and moderate learning difficulties so they can take a full part in lessons. A strong emphasis on speaking and listening helps all pupils, especially those learning English as an additional language, to develop their vocabulary, fluency and confidence.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

There has been a marked improvement from the good curriculum found at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils benefit from a diverse range of valuable experiences that help them to develop good personal and academic skills. Literacy and numeracy are given high priority and pupils are able to develop their skills well in specific lessons. They also have a great many opportunities to practise these skills in other subjects, for example in history, when Year 6 pupils write about how the Regents' Canal, which backs onto the school, was used in days gone by. These are good examples of the excellent use that is made of the immediate and wider localities to add breadth and relevance to pupils' learning. Pupils learn to value art and music through an extremely well-integrated programme, which helps them learn about the wide variety of cultures within their community. A strong emphasis on physical education through weekly lessons and a good range of after school clubs extend pupils' skills and teach them to work cooperatively. This is recognised in the Activemark gained for provision of a wide range of sporting activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is an all-pervading atmosphere of care and support which, when linked to the staff valuing each pupil individually, enables all to settle quickly. This is particularly the case for the many refugee or asylum seeker pupils who are new to schooling in England. This contributes well to their enjoyment, good behaviour and excellent progress in learning. The school provides pupils with a very safe and secure place. Child protection procedures are thorough, and procedures

to promote pupils' health and safety are very effective. The personal, social and health education programme pays very good attention to development of safe and healthy lifestyles.

Academic care and guidance are very good. Teachers know their pupils very well and monitor their academic progress systematically. There are clear expectations for progress from year to year and from the pupils' starting points. Pupils have good knowledge of their individual targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very many who speak English as an additional language receive very effective support tailored to their needs. Pupils who have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties are given high quality support by the learning mentor and the art therapist as well as through the school's excellent provision for vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school functions as an effective and coherent community because it is led and managed exceptionally well. The school rightly describes its work as being forward-thinking, analytical and enthusiastic. There is a proven track record of sustained high standards while continuing to bring about improvements in provision, giving every confidence that the school can continue to improve. The headteacher is an outstanding role model for all members of the school community. She has been highly successful in creating a hardworking team who are united in their aim to provide the highest quality of education in an atmosphere where everyone feels happy, valued, cared for and respected. Teamwork is paramount as seen, for example, in the excellent and varied contribution made by subject leaders to the school as a whole. Because of the high quality of information it collects, the school has a very clear picture of its strengths. All staff with responsibilities are meticulous in checking that the plans are working and they allocate resources accordingly. All staff respond exceptionally well to the demands placed upon them. The school works in very close partnership with other schools in the area, particularly the partner secondary school and this greatly benefits the school in extending the range of expertise available. The promotion of community cohesion is good. Links locally are excellent through local music festivals and community events. In addition, the school provides community language classes. There are good links with the wider world, for example through a school in West Jerusalem and a junior school in Adelaide, Australia. Pupils from the Jerusalem school have visited Primrose Hill to share their musical talents and take part in workshops, and teachers from the school have made reciprocal visits. Governance is good, with governors having a very clear understanding of the school, though, as yet, they are over-reliant on the headteacher for information about provision.

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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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	2
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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
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 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?	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

17 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Primrose Hill School, London, NW1 8JL

Thank you so much for making Mary, Sibhani and myself so welcome and for talking with us when we visited your school. We enjoyed finding out about your school and we particularly enjoyed listening to your singing in assembly and looking at your beautiful artwork around the whole school.

Yours is an excellent school in all respects. Your achievement throughout the school is outstanding. We were very impressed with the way that you use so many skills across all your subjects. We enjoyed looking at the many displays of work that helped to show the wide variety of things that you are taught. Your teachers have excellent skills and they help you to learn exceptionally well. They plan interesting and exciting activities for you, and we can understand why you all love lessons and learning.

Your behaviour is good, you have positive attitudes towards each other and we were very impressed how well all of you get on together. You have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Your headteacher and all the other adults involved in leading and managing your school do an excellent job. They make sure that you receive the best possible education.

We have asked your school to do one thing. This is to continue to ensure your rates of attendance improve. You can help by making sure that you don't miss attending school.

Once again, thank you for your help. We know that the staff will help you to keep doing your best.

Yours faithfully

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector