

Old Palace Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100892
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	323368
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Olson Davis

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	416
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 Paul Martin
Headteacher	Mr Gary Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Leonard's Street Bow London E3 3BT
Telephone number	020 8980 3020
Fax number	020 8980 2221

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger-than-average school serves mainly a Bangladeshi community in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Other ethnic groups include pupils from Black African and mixed backgrounds. Almost all pupils speak a language other than English as their home language, which proportion is well above average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils who find learning difficult is in line with the national average. Their range of needs include specific learning difficulties and speech, language and communication difficulties. The rate at which pupils join or leave the school is above average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for pupils in the Reception classes. The school has a number of awards including the Healthy School Award and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Old Palace Primary is an outstanding school in which pupils thrive, both academically and personally. It is a deservedly popular school and the majority of parents are highly appreciative of its work. As one wrote, 'My child is leaving Old Palace to go the secondary school. I am very pleased with his education at the school over the years.'

Central to the school's success and pupils' excellent achievement is outstanding leadership and management at all levels. Under the purposeful leadership of the highly committed headteacher, all adults work very closely as a team, continually driving the school forward to provide what is best for pupils. As a result, all pupils, including those from different ethnic backgrounds, those newly arrived and those of different abilities, feel fully included in the life of the school and are eager to learn. The school works very effectively to ensure that the cultures represented in the school are valued and celebrated, and this strongly supports pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Strong links with the local and wider community, other schools and outside agencies provide excellent benefits for pupils' learning and well-being. The school reaches out to the immediate and global community based on an accurate analysis of what it needs to do to promote community cohesion. As a result, pupils are extremely well prepared for life in multicultural Britain.

Outstanding provision for care, guidance and support ensures that pupils feel very well cared for and have a very clear idea of how to improve their work. Children are given an excellent start to their education in the Reception classes. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school because of excellent teaching and outstanding support for their additional needs. Central to pupils' outstanding progress is the skilful use of assessment information to set interesting and challenging work that is very well matched to pupils' varying needs and abilities. Other important features of teaching and learning are the very good relationships and teachers' high expectations of children's work and behaviour. This increases pupils' enjoyment of learning, raises their self-esteem and prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage in their education.

From often very low starting points pupils achieve exceptionally well to attain above-average standards at the end of Year 6. Standards in English, although above average, are not as high as in mathematics and science because fewer pupils achieve the highest Level 5 in their writing. Nonetheless, the rich and varied curriculum is particularly successful in meeting the needs of pupils identified as gifted and talented as well as pupils at an early stage of learning English and those who find learning difficult. Teachers have a very good understanding of how to help those who have specific needs through well-thought-out strategies such as the use of 'nurture groups'.

School leaders and governors know the school exceptionally well and have selected initiatives which have a direct impact on pupils' standards and personal development. The school has maintained the many excellent features identified at the last inspection and made further improvements to pupils' achievement and the leadership and management. This confirms the school's excellent capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision for the youngest children is outstanding because it is exceptionally well organised as a result of the inspirational leadership of the coordinator and the commitment and enthusiasm

of the team. Consequently, the indoor and outdoor areas provide an interesting and stimulating environment that motivates the children to want to learn. The quality of teaching from dedicated teachers and classroom assistants is consistently excellent. As a result, children make at least good and often outstanding progress in all areas of learning, so their attainment is broadly in line with what is expected of children at the start of Year 1. There is a strong emphasis on developing children's language, reading and writing skills. Children enthusiastically share their experiences through words and pictures; for example, a photograph of the children at sports day was used very well as a stimulus for guided writing. The strong emphasis on the features of a sentence enabled the children to make rapid progress in their understanding of sentence structure. Very good use is made of computer technology to make learning stimulating and fun.

Relationships are extremely good. The warm welcome that parents receive and the opportunities they have to share their children's 'WOW' books encourage them to be involved in their children's learning. Expectations for behaviour and routines are made clear and reinforced positively and consistently so that children learn very quickly what is expected of them. Robust policies and procedures are consistently implemented to ensure that children's welfare is extremely well promoted. As a result, children are very well cared for and happy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve exceptionally well as they move through the school. Excellent teaching, very effective teaching assistants and very well managed support programmes contribute significantly to this. Most children join the Reception class with low levels of skills. A significant minority have not had any pre-school experience. Many children are at an early stage of acquiring English language skills. They make excellent progress, so that by the time they start in Year 1 they are working broadly in line with expectations for the age group in most areas of learning. However, they are still below average in their literacy skills. Those learning English make great strides in acquiring fluency in the spoken word, but their reading and writing skills do not improve as rapidly. As a result of excellent teaching in Key Stage 1, pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. The rate of progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6 as pupils build on the excellent foundations established in lower years. Standards in mathematics and science are above average by the end of Year 6. Standards in English are also above average, but fewer pupils reach Level 5 in writing than in other subjects because they find it difficult to include more sophisticated and creative language in their writing. The school has identified this as an area for development. Pupils learning English as an additional language make exceptional progress as a result of the very effective additional support they receive. Pupils who find learning difficult also receive well-focused support and achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' great enjoyment and appreciation of the school is evident in their excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. They are polite and courteous to adults and to one another. The pupils report that they feel very safe in school and know who to go to for help.

They understand how to avoid risks both in school and in the world outside, such as when using the internet. They are fully aware of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise; as one pupil stated, 'I like to run laps because it is fun and good for your health.' They participate keenly in after school physical activities such as golf, judo, tennis, football and fencing. Pupils contribute very well to their school through the work of the student council, and are proud of the changes they have made, such as improvements to the play equipment and playground. Attendance is average. The school works very hard to promote good attendance and it is improving steadily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils speak highly of the way teachers support and inspire them during lessons. They greatly enjoy their learning and achieve exceptionally well because work is presented in interesting ways which captures pupils' interest and imaginations. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They make excellent use of assessment data to provide work that is pitched at the right level to ensure challenge for pupils of all abilities. Very effective deployment of well-briefed teaching assistants and specialist teachers ensures that all groups are well catered for. Teachers give clear explanations so that pupils are very clear about what they are to learn. They encourage pupils to discuss their work and to assess their own progress in the lessons. They check pupils' understanding extremely well through detailed questioning. Teachers' marking is excellent, providing pupils with useful, individualised feedback about how to improve and, as a result, pupils make excellent progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum is very closely monitored by school leaders to ensure that it meets the needs of all learners. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers make exciting links between subjects so that learning is meaningful for pupils and extends their skills in real-life situations. However, some more-able pupils do not always have enough opportunities to develop the sophisticated and creative language they need to reach the highest level - Level 5 - in their writing. Information and communication technology is used widely to stimulate learning and is effectively used by pupils, for example to produce animated film. The strong provision in art, music and humanities includes visits to art galleries, museums and projects with community arts organisations. This supports pupils' cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils develop a very good understanding of how to stay safe and how to live healthy lives through the health education programme and physical education lessons. This has been recognised through the award of the Activemark and Healthy School status. Recently introduced residential visits, an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and themed events, such as the 2012 Olympics 'Legacy Now Project', greatly enrich the curriculum and contribute to pupils' outstanding social and cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's strongly caring ethos means that pupils are valued as individuals and thrive and grow in confidence. Procedures for ensuring the protection, safety and well-being of pupils

are robust and fully meet government guidance, so pupils feel very safe. Effective use is made of staff expertise and outside agencies to support pupils and their parents. For example, English language classes for parents enable them to support their children's learning more effectively. Induction arrangements are very detailed and helpful. The needs of newly arrived pupils are quickly assessed, allowing them to settle quickly and get the support they need. The provision for pupils who find learning difficult as well as those at the early stages of acquiring English language skills are exceptionally well organised by the highly skilled inclusion coordinator. These pupils' needs are thoroughly and accurately assessed. This information is used exceptionally well to devise highly effective teaching programmes which are rigorously monitored to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress. Excellent tracking systems and detailed analysis of information ensure that staff can very accurately plan the next steps in learning and set challenging targets for pupils. Consequently, pupils are very clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work because of the excellent help and guidance they receive from their teachers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leaders work very well together to provide a high standard of care for pupils and to ensure a strong focus on raising standards. Highly effective self-evaluation involves all staff members and leads to prompt and successful actions being taken to bring about improvements. School leaders and subject leaders analyse assessment data rigorously to set challenging targets for the school and for individual pupils. This information is used outstandingly well to check that different groups of pupils are making excellent progress and that swift action is taken to remedy dips in performance. As a result of these detailed interventions, standards at the end of Year 2 have improved significantly and standards at the end of Year 6 continue to rise. The school places great importance on developing its teachers to take on leadership roles. Despite many staff changes over the past few years, the high quality of teaching has been maintained. This is because school leaders have established highly effective systems to support the induction of teachers new to the profession and to the school. The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well and pupils are extremely well prepared for life in multicultural Britain. Governors know the school very well through the high-quality information provided by the school and their own effective monitoring. This allows them to participate fully in managing the school's strategic development.

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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?	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	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?	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	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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Old Palace Primary School, London, E3 3BT

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you and took careful note of what you and your parents had to say about the school.

You go to an outstanding school. Here are a few of the many excellent things we found.

- The work in the Reception classes is outstanding and gives the youngest children an excellent start in your school.
- You make excellent progress in your lessons because the teaching is of high quality and you all want to do your best.
- You greatly enjoy school and behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. This is because you are extremely well cared for by the adults in school and this helps you to feel safe.
- You take lots of exercise and know a great deal about healthy eating.
- Many of you make an excellent contribution to the community, for example by representing the views of your classmates or helping to raise money for charity.
- You all benefit greatly from the many interesting activities and experiences that the school provides for you, not least the many trips you go on.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior staff and governors run the school outstandingly well. They are extremely clear about what needs to be done to improve the school.

One of the hardest jobs when a school is so good is to make sure that it keeps on doing well. We have asked the school to help some of you do even better in your writing so that you reach the higher Level 5 in the national assessments at the end of Year 6. You can help by using more sophisticated and creative language in your writing and always trying your hardest.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your school and wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Olson Davis

Lead Inspector