

Princess May Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 100239 |
| Local Authority | Hackney |
| Inspection number | 285750 |
| Inspection dates | 12–13 November 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Martin Beale |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 359 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Justin D'Agostino |
| Headteacher | Mr Stephen Spooner |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25 February 2002 |
| School address | Princess May Road London N16 8DF |
| Telephone number | 020 7254 1589 |
| Fax number | 020 7254 3024 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school with Nursery provides various extended services to support families and the local community. Many families in the area experience considerable social and economic disadvantage. Free school meal eligibility is high as is pupil turnover, and there are several refugees or asylum seekers. Nearly all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and over one-third is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of the pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than in most other primary schools. The new headteacher has been in post since the start of this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school has been through a difficult period over recent years, suffering from high staff turnover and several changes of headteacher. To have survived this intact and to have improved pupil achievement is due in no small part to the intensive support of The Learning Trust (the local authority). The fortunes of the school are now changing for the better under the leadership of the new headteacher. He has quickly taken effective action to bring stability to the school and provide a platform for its improvement. Staff morale is high. While the school's effectiveness is satisfactory, it is well placed to move forward under his guidance ably supported by the deputy headteacher and an increasingly effective governing body.

Pupils respect and speak highly of their teachers. They try hard in lessons and care for each other, particularly when newly arrived in school or in the country. High pupil mobility is a major challenge for staff and a continual feature of the day-to-day work of the school. Attainment is very low when pupils join the school. Many arrive throughout the year from overseas and start with little English, and so are not able to perform to their ability until they have mastered English. School data shows that most of the later arrivals do not reach national expectations in English and mathematics by Year 6. This contributes to standards remaining exceptionally low by Year 6, although achievement is satisfactory given the pupils' very low starting points. In spite of their low standards, the groundwork laid by the school and the pupils' positive attitudes to learning give a solid base for the next stage of their education.

Improving teaching is the headteacher's major priority as it is not of the quality needed to generate consistently good progress. Firm action, including the removal of inadequate teachers has led to improvements already. Classrooms are calm places in which to learn, because teachers consistently apply the 'traffic light' system and help pupils see how to improve their attitude and behaviour. Learning is slow at times largely because teachers do not focus sharply enough on the specific learning needs of individual pupils. The guidance for teachers on meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties are not always clear and their progress is not always being monitored rigorously enough. This leads to some pupils with learning difficulties not reaching their expected targets in reading and writing.

The headteacher's presence around the school and the support of his deputy generate confidence amongst staff and pupils. They confirm that improvements in behaviour are due to the consistent implementation of the procedures introduced since his arrival. The headteacher, staff and governors are quite clear about what is needed next if the school is to reach its goals. They have identified that subject leaders, up to now, have not been able to play a consistent role in improving pupil achievement because of many changes in headteachers over the last five years. It is now a priority to clarify what is expected of them and provide support for this to be achieved. The headteacher is challenging staff and pupils to do better, while providing support and guidance as well as a firm hand to help achieve his aims.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children have a sound start to their schooling in the Foundation Stage. They feel secure and happily engage in activities because of the positive approach shown by teachers and support staff in striking a balance between formal and informal learning. Sharper assessment and regular reviews of the children's progress are leading to a better match of work to individual needs.

Children make satisfactory progress because of the emphasis placed on language development to tackle their weak skills on entry, although few reach expected goals by the end of Reception, particularly in key areas of literacy and numeracy. Adults are careful to explain and develop new vocabulary, although there are times when opportunities are missed to expand and develop the children's language. A sharp focus is placed on personal and social development because the school identifies that few children have opportunities for structured play with others before starting school. Teachers in each of the classes provide a stimulating and interesting learning environment, although free access to the outside area for Reception children is restricted by the building design. Links are developing between staff to improve transition into Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop teachers' skills so that they can better cater for the wide range of pupils' needs in their classes.
- Develop the skills of subject leaders so that they contribute more effectively to the drive to raise pupil achievement.
- Improve the provision for pupils with learning difficulties in order to accelerate their progress, particularly in reading and writing.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall performance is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The youngest children make satisfactory progress from low attainment on entry during their time in the Foundation Stage. Year 2 assessment results were exceptionally low in 2007 having fallen since 2005, but represented satisfactory progress for most pupils given their entry levels and time spent at the school. Improved progress by pupils at Key Stage 2 since 2005 has led to rising standards by the end of Year 6, although test results were still exceptionally low in 2007. The progress of many pupils starts to take off rapidly once they have developed sufficient fluency in English language, but they may not be at the school long enough to reach the standards expected of eleven-year-olds. Strategies to support pupils with learning difficulties are not evaluated sufficiently to judge their effectiveness. As a result, some are not reaching their expected targets in reading and writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils from many different backgrounds work and play happily together, and enjoy school. They learn to respect the customs and cultures of others and reflect on how they might care for each other better. They know what is expected of them and have a clear framework through the 'traffic light' system within which to learn how to behave. As children in Reception reading *Cinderella* said, 'the ugly sisters ought to be on red.' Letters home from the headteacher to reward good behaviour provide an incentive and boost self-esteem. This is leading to improving behaviour and a sharp reduction in the high number of exclusions recorded last year, although a small number of pupils are not regularly conforming to the school's expectations. Pupils are aware that they need to work hard so that they can get a good report and later, a good job. Through the school council, 'Playground Friends' and recycling, pupils make a positive contribution to the community. They largely understand how to keep themselves safe and

healthy. Most pupils attend regularly and arrive on time, although the school is working hard to improve both the attendance and punctuality of a small but significant number of pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers are taking on board the new headteacher's advice and guidance with varying success, but with clear evidence that improvements are taking place, although relatively few lessons are of the quality needed to move learning forward rapidly enough for pupils to close the gap with national standards. Pupils are motivated to learn particularly when teachers engage them through questions, use interesting practical activities and employ interactive whiteboards to grab their attention. They enjoy discussing work with their 'talk partners' and supporting each other in groups. Teachers and other classroom staff work well together, with activities at usually three different levels of difficulty. Pupils benefit from adult support in small groups, but the teachers' skills are not always sufficiently honed to meet the specific learning and language needs of all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has not received the same focus as improving teaching and learning, although basic skills are receiving careful attention, and pupils' writing benefits from the support of The Learning Trust consultants. One weakness is that insufficient attention is given to developing the skills of investigation and enquiry, particularly in science. The programme for the pupils' personal development is starting to show clear benefits on the pupils' attitudes and understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives. Music plays an important part in the life of the school. With the clubs and extra activities provided, music adds much to the pupils' experiences and enjoyment. Careful assessment enables targeted action to support pupils who are falling behind the school's expectations of them, but this has not led to planned programmes for pupils with particular talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures to protect pupils' safety are in place, understood and rigorously implemented. Pupils feel safe and say there is always an adult, to turn to if they have any problems. The arrangements to help pupils settle, including the frequent new arrivals, are tailored for each individual's needs and their progress carefully monitored. Support for pupils learning English as an additional language forms an integral part of classroom routines. The school's wide range of other services, including the use of translators, is successful in supporting pupils and their families. Both the 'Breakfast Club' and 'After-School Club' are much valued by pupils and parents. The school's close contact with outside agencies and community organisations help to support specific pupils and their families. Academic guidance is not as secure. Pupils are not sure about either their individual targets or what they need to do to improve their work. Marking is also not regularly helpful to the pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The newly appointed headteacher has successfully united staff behind his vision for the school and its main priorities for development. He is supported well by the deputy headteacher, so that action decided upon is seen through and evaluated before the next steps are taken. Structures are being introduced to make subject leaders more effective by involving them more consistently in monitoring provision in their areas of responsibility. Plans for improvement are based on challenging but realistic targets. Procedures to improve the performance of staff are based on an accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, including an increasingly effective analysis of assessment data. The chair and vice chair of governors have a clear picture of the school. They have recruited skilled governors to key roles, although several vacancies for parent governors remain to be filled in the near future. They provide valuable support for the headteacher, including at times when difficult decisions need to be taken.

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

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Princess May Primary School, London, N16 8DF

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school. You were all very helpful. We enjoyed talking to you and your teachers and watching you learn. You told us how much your school has improved particularly since your new headteacher arrived. You also told us how much you like your teachers.

You make satisfactory progress during your time at school. You enjoy school, work hard and behave sensibly. The care and support you receive, particularly when you are newly arrived at school help you to settle in well. We were particularly impressed by how you are learning to take care of each other. You understand the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe at all times.

Your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school better. We think that there are things that can be even better so we have asked your teachers to:

- Push your learning forward more rapidly in all classrooms.
- Take a greater part in helping the headteacher to move the school forward.
- Make sure those of you with learning difficulties get the help you need.

Some of you do not attend regularly enough and too many of you arrive late for school in the morning! If this sounds like you, then please do something about it. You can also help your school to improve by continuing to try your best and help each other.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector