

Stillness Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100704
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	307448
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Christopher Gray

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gill Moss
Headteacher	Ms Selina Sharpe
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2003
School address	Brockley Rise Forest Hill London SE23 1NH
Telephone number	020 8690 1416
Fax number	020 8690 6349

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger most schools of its type. The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals is average. About two thirds of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds though few are at the early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is less than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils achieve well and reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are well above average by Year 6. Their personal development is outstanding. A group of pupils was asked what they thought would be the most important thing they could learn by the age of 11. An older pupil responded, 'Social life - how to meet other people and learn how they feel.' Many agreed, though others felt that mathematics is important, 'so that you can be sure you get the right change in shops'. Pupils enjoy school enormously and have a well-developed understanding of the importance of a healthy life-style: 'If you're healthy,' one observed, 'you have less chance of dying young.'

Pupils make good progress in their learning because of good teaching. In an outstanding music lesson, Year 4 pupils were eager to learn about Hindu rhythmic patterns. They practised their own ideas and then performed them to a high standard on percussion instruments. Pupils make good use of their writing skills in a range of subjects. A Year 5 girl wrote an account of the Trojan War in her own words: 'On the way back to Troy, Helen was kicking and screaming but the goddess Aphrodite put a spell on her so she fell head over heels in love with Paris.' The school surveyed boys to find out why many of them were less keen on writing. 'Writing's for girls' was one comment. As a result, the curriculum is being revised to give different writing opportunities to boys and so raise their standards. Pupils of both sexes do not always use joined-up writing as much as they should.

The school gives its pupils good care, guidance and support, with outstanding features in pastoral care. Pupils say they feel safe in school; as one put it, 'If you're upset, you can always count on someone to see if you're all right.' Academic guidance is good. Newly computerised systems of assessment enable teachers to spot quickly where extra help is needed.

Good leadership and management give clear direction to the school and leaders at all levels share in the strong vision of the headteacher. Staff have achieved a good degree of consistency in their work - for example, in the very good quality of marking. This consistency ensures that the evaluation and improvement of the school's work are effective, giving good capacity to improve further.

The school has many good points which were recognised by most of the parents who responded to the questionnaire. One parent commented, 'My child has a very positive experience at school. He participates in many varied activities, during classes and extra-curricular.' However, a number of parents expressed their belief that the school does not take sufficient account of their views or keep them sufficiently informed. Inspectors investigated these issues thoroughly and found that the school does more than many schools to involve parents in their children's education. This is seen in the increased completion rates of pupils' homework and high attendance rates at parents' evenings. Nonetheless, the school needs to improve how it is perceived by a minority of parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the work to raise standards in boys' writing and to increase pupils' use of joined-up writing throughout the school.
- Enable more parents to recognise the school's good work and to feel part of it.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. They begin school with above average standards in English, mathematics and science and build well on them to reach standards that are well above average by Year 6. In the 2007 national tests, results were not as high in English as in mathematics and science because a small number of boys did not do as well in writing as they should have done. The school is addressing this issue well and the current Year 6 is on track to achieve its challenging targets in all three subjects in 2008. Other groups of pupils achieve at broadly similar rates to their classmates. The support offered by the inclusion department to all pupils who need particular support is very good and enables them to achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils show a great deal of respect for the views and beliefs of others and are very supportive of one another. Their behaviour in lessons is excellent and they are very willing to take responsibility for their own learning. This is clearly demonstrated in the way pupils respond to teachers' comments in their written work. Outside in the playground pupils get on very well together. They feel safe in school, because they have confidence in the staff to look after them and sort out any problems that they may have. They and their parents say that any bullying is dealt with well. Pupils love coming to school and are enthusiastic about everything the school has to offer them. Their attendance is good.

Pupils make the most of the many opportunities they have to take responsibility, for example, through the school and class councils, as peer mediators and play leaders, or as energy monitors. They take these responsibilities seriously and know that they make an active contribution to the smooth running of the school. Pupils respond whole-heartedly to the school's drive for healthy living. They understand the importance of making informed choices about their diet and their eagerness to take part in sport is outstanding. Their good basic skills and excellent social skills mean they are well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn well because their lessons are interesting and teachers make good links between subjects. For example, Year 4 pupils were starting to write a sketch of a Victorian character. Some chose boy chimney sweeps while others took a more dreamlike approach: 'At the foot of the stairs I saw a cloud of the darkest hue,' wrote one boy.

Teachers' planning is thorough and generally meets the full range of pupils' needs, though there are occasions when pupils find some of the work too difficult. Teachers use marking very well to show pupils how to improve. Pupils' work is mostly presented well, but teachers do not always insist that pupils use joined-up writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers its pupils a good curriculum. It focuses well on literacy, numeracy and ICT, and helps pupils use the skills they learn across a range of subjects. ICT is particularly well used for research and presentation of topic work. Some good initiatives have been introduced to give pupils more opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English and to make writing more appealing to boys. These changes are beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement. The curriculum is enriched well with a very good range of visits and clubs, particularly for sport and music. These help pupils develop a range of important skills and interests very successfully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care for pupils is excellent. Pupils feel really safe in school and trust the adults to do their best for them. Procedures for safeguarding children meet statutory requirements. The school consults pupils' opinions on a wide range of matters. A recent result of this has been an increase in the amount of independent research that pupils undertake, since this was found to be a preferred style of learning for many.

Academic guidance is good. Most pupils know and use their targets. One pupil told an inspector, 'If you don't know your targets, you won't know how to improve.' Assessment procedures have been improved recently. This work has been led very well by the deputy headteacher and the information is mostly used to good effect by all staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher receives very good support from her deputy headteacher. Together, they give the school strong, purposeful direction, and leaders at all levels understand their roles and work together for the common good. There are clear, systematic processes for planning, monitoring and evaluating the school's work so that leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas it needs to improve. Self-evaluation is good and school development planning focuses sharply on the most important priorities; for example, the school is successfully raising standards in boys' writing. Good systems for assessment and tracking have identified the main issues and measures to tackle them have been introduced smoothly throughout the school. The governors carry out their role well. They have a good insight into the workings of the school and provide the right balance of challenge and support to help the school develop and improve.

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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?	2
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stillness Junior School, London, SE23 1NH

Many of you made us feel welcome when we visited your school a few weeks ago. You were very polite and we enjoyed the chance to talk to you. Thank you for helping us so well with our work. When I met a group of children on Thursday afternoon, I told you that I would quote in my report some of the things you told me. I've put quite a lot of these in, including some that I found in your written work. I wonder if you will recognise them?

You told us that you go to a good school and we agree. We enjoyed watching the video that many of you made. Two of the best features of Stillness Juniors are your outstanding behaviour and excellent attitudes to learning. (Outstanding is another word for excellent.) You have an excellent approach to keeping healthy, taking an enormous amount of exercise and doing your best to eat a well balanced diet. I especially enjoyed hearing what you most value about your education.

You work hard and reach standards in English, mathematics and science which are well above those that most pupils gain. Boys were not always as fond as girls of writing but the adults are doing their best to plan work that appeals to everyone, such as the very good work on Slavery that I saw on display in the Annex. Quite a lot of you do not always use joined-up writing all the time and you need to keep practising to make sure it is second nature to write in this way.

Lessons interest you because teachers work hard to plan them and because they teach well. They spend a lot of time on marking your work and we could see how this really helps you to improve. You respond by making good use of your targets.

Your headteacher and her staff lead the school well. You have a very positive view of all they do for you and many of your parents share it. However, some parents feel the school could do more to listen to their views, so we have asked the school to help more parents to recognise the school's good work and to feel part of it.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Christopher Gray

Lead Inspector