

Stillness Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100705
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	307449
Inspection dates	5–6 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Burke
Headteacher	Mrs Alison McClelland
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2005
School address	Brockley Rise London SE23 1NH
Telephone number	020 8690 1208
Fax number	020 8314 0297

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In this large school, around 30% of pupils are White British and around 20% are Black British of Caribbean heritage. Other pupils come from a cosmopolitan range of different backgrounds. As many as 23 languages are spoken, although only a small number of pupils are still at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. A parent summed the school up accurately, describing Stillness Infant as '...a safe and happy, stimulating environment for my child, which is seen in his enthusiasm for school'. The school is very well-resourced and school leaders and governors have been highly creative in making the very best use of limited space to create classroom environments that are stimulating and exciting places to learn. Almost all the classrooms have their own mezzanine floor and conservatory, which teachers use imaginatively for practical activities and for groups of pupils working with support.

Pupils thrive and their personal development is outstanding because they respond with such enthusiasm to an excellent curriculum. This ranges far beyond the basics and helps pupils to broaden their horizons, learning more, for example, about the different cultural backgrounds represented in the school community. The basics are certainly not neglected, however. Thanks to consistently good teaching, with much that is outstanding, particularly in Years 1 and 2, pupils progress at a very rapid rate, so that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are way above average, as they have been in every year since the last inspection. This represents outstanding achievement. Progress in the Foundation Stage, though good, is not as rapid as that in Years 1 and 2, because not enough is always expected of the children. This means that sometimes children are given too much help when they could be encouraged more to work independently.

Although some parents call for still better communication with home, the school works well in partnership with parents, who, in turn, are extremely supportive of their children's education. Their support contributes strongly to the pupils' achievement. The school also draws well on assistance from external agencies so that extra help is given to pupils who need it. As a result, pupils of all abilities and those from different backgrounds all progress at similarly rapid rates. Care, guidance and support are good. Children are looked after well. Some pupils have very helpful and specific personal targets for their writing, particularly in Year 2, but they do not otherwise always know what they need to do to improve their work.

In this well run school, the headteacher and school leaders have had particular success in establishing a calm climate for learning, where pupils are keen to do well. Many parents particularly appreciate the disciplined 'no nonsense' approach which has led to exemplary behaviour in lessons. However, some parents voice concerns that the school insists on too much stillness in the lunch hall and would like their children to be able to chat and socialise more over lunch. School leaders' monitoring is effective, giving them a mostly accurate view of how well Stillness Infant is doing. Much monitoring is informal, however, with, for example, school leaders only recently beginning to analyse children's progress in the Foundation Stage. Nonetheless, the school's consistent track record of success shows its good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start in the Nursery and Reception Years with skills and knowledge that are generally in line with those expected for their ages. They make good progress, although the school's own assessments of standards at the end of Foundation Stage vary widely and in some cases appear to understate the above average standards attained. Successful induction procedures

for introducing the children and their parents into school help children to settle quickly. Relationships are strong and, as a result, children feel safe, grow in confidence, and quickly learn and follow the school's orderly routines. Children's needs are appropriately identified, and enjoyable practical activities are planned inside and outside the classroom using a very good variety of resources. Good communication with parents ensures that they know what work the children are doing at school and how they can help them at home. However, not enough opportunity is given to the children to develop their independence and think for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Track more rigorously children's progress through the Foundation Stage and give the children more opportunities to do things for themselves.
- Ensure that all pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards at this school have been consistently exceptionally high. Results in the 2007 national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics were the equivalent of a year ahead of the national figures. Pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress, including the very able and those who need extra help. The same is true for pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. The pupils' outstanding achievement is due to the high standard of teaching in Years 1 and 2, and an excellent curriculum, coupled with the very good support they get from their parents. Pupils' academic achievement, combined with their personal skills, provides excellent foundations for their future lives.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has a vibrant atmosphere and pupils display confidence and high self-esteem. Pupils clearly enjoy themselves and this is reflected in their good attendance, their excellent enthusiasm for learning and positive attitudes to school life. One parent wrote of her daughter that 'On school holidays, no matter how much fun she is having, she still can't wait to get back to school'. The pride that pupils take in their work is very evident in the high standard of presentation seen throughout the school. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils report no bullying and they feel safe in the knowledge that any incidents would be dealt with promptly. Members of the school 'eco-council' take their responsibilities very seriously and have initiated positive changes in school, including the related activities of paper recycling, litter reduction and the composting of fruit and vegetable waste. Pupils' environmental initiatives and their fundraising activities have a positive impact on the local community and beyond. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have a good and growing understanding of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and they clearly know how to keep safe. They are supportive of each other in the classroom and around the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but much in Years 1 and 2 is outstanding. Work is very carefully matched to pupils' different capabilities so that all benefit from good challenge. Relationships are very good, with pupils often trying hard because they are eager to please their teachers and the other adults in the class. Although teaching assistants and other adult helpers work very well with small groups, they are not always used as effectively as they could be during lesson introductions, when sometimes they are merely passive observers. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 makes very good use of open questioning to draw out more detailed responses from the pupils. Expectations are not quite as high in the Foundation Stage, so that there is not the same impressive pace of learning as in the older classes and children are not always given enough opportunities to develop as independent learners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils benefit from an impressively rich curriculum that excites their interest and enthusiasm, so that they do very well across a wide range of subjects as well as in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Facilities are first-rate, with classrooms that are 'Aladdin's Caves' of discovery. An excellent range of additional activities is available which also contributes to pupils' great enjoyment of school and to their rapid progress. The many extra-curricular activities on offer include French, gymnastics, football, dance, drama and a wide range of musical activities, which include a celebrated gospel choir. Some parents, however, voice concern over the charges made for out-of-school activities, some of which are quite high. The curriculum promotes very good cultural awareness and this contributes to the exceptional racial harmony throughout the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school offers a high level of care and support to all pupils, who in turn get on with and look out for one another. There are very positive relationships between pupils and adults. One pupil summed these up by exclaiming, 'Teachers are fantastic, great, wonderful and every other word that says they are the best!' The warm and caring atmosphere within the school ensures that pupils feel safe and secure. All procedures are in place for safeguarding the health and welfare of pupils, although some parents would like to see greater playground supervision. There are good procedures for induction into the nursery and reception and transition to the junior school.

Teachers' marking offers pupils encouragement and praises what has been done well. At its best, the marking offers clear points to pupils about how they can make their work even better. Sometimes, however, this advice is not clear enough and children do not always know what to do to move their work on.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors know the school very well and are committed to leading a happy school where pupils enjoy learning. They have established a school where good behaviour and positive attitudes are strongly encouraged and rewarded. They have ensured a consistently high calibre of teaching in Years 1 and 2 and have helped to create a curriculum that captivates children's interest and motivates them to learn. They rely, however, on systems that are rather informal, with, for example, the only formal monitoring of teaching and learning carried out as part of teachers' performance management. Although this has worked well in Years 1 and 2, where there are mainly very experienced teaching staff, it has not served the Foundation Stage quite so well. Analysis of children's progress in the Foundation Stage has lacked rigour, and school leaders have not given enough attention to ensuring that children in the Foundation Stage progress as well as those in the older classes.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	2
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 the learners' needs?	2
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?	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	1
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	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	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

19 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stillness Infant School, London, SE23 1NH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We had great fun listening to your singing. It's a long time since I've heard 'The Happy Wanderer' and I don't think I've ever heard it sung so well.

Some of you told us that you thought your school was 'fantastic'. We agree. Stillness Infant is an outstanding school where you all make super progress by the end of Year 2. Standards are high but, just as important, you are all being helped to grow into sensible, confident young people - well prepared for when you go on to junior school and for the future beyond. We were impressed with how well behaved you are and how very well you all get on with and look out for each other.

You do so well because the teaching is good, with much that is even better. The help your parents give you also plays an important part. You enjoy all the many different activities on offer, and you are very lucky to have such exciting classrooms with their lush conservatories and what the little ones call the 'bedrooms' up the stairs. The school takes very good care of you. We have asked your teachers to make sure that they give you all a clearer idea of what you need to do to make your work even better, just as they do for some of you through your individual targets for extended writing. You can help too by checking that you understand the comments that teachers write when they mark your work and by continuing to work hard and do your best.

Your school is well run and your headteacher, school leaders and governors have done a great job in making Stillness Infant so successful. They have not kept as careful an eye on children's progress in the Nursery and Reception classes to bring it up to the high standards in Years 1 and 2. We have asked them to improve this and to help the younger children to make even faster progress by letting them try to do more things on their own.

Yours sincerely,

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector