

Stag Lane Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102197
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	307927
Inspection dates	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Raminder Arora

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

Type of School	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	8-12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Virendra Rathod
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Evans
Date of previous school inspection	03 November 2003
School address	Collier Drive Edgware HA8 5RU
Telephone number	020 8952 2731
Fax number	020 8951 3750

Age group	8-12
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school with a particular focus on the following: the quality of teaching and how it impacts pupils' achievement across the school; raising standards for the Black African boys; and the monitoring role of senior staff and subject leaders in raising standards. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, samples of pupils' work and scrutiny of main planning and monitoring documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Some observations and discussions were made about the quality of the other aspects of the school's work, but not in detail. The inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its evaluation were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a popular and larger than average three-form entry middle school. Almost all the pupils are from minority ethnic groups with the larger numbers being from Indian and Black African backgrounds. The majority speak another language at home and some enter the school speaking little or no English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is high, and a significant number are refugees or asylum seekers. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. These are mainly specific learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A considerable number arrive and leave during the year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Stag Lane Middle is an outstanding school where pupils thrive academically and personally. All staff as well as pupils and parents are involved in the evaluation of the school's work and help identify how the school can get even better. Many parents praise the school and express their appreciation through comments such as, 'an excellent school, flourishing in a changing community, the headteacher is a model leader', and 'staff are very friendly and approachable, take pride in pupils' work and help them achieve their goals'. All staff work together as a strong team. Their regular monitoring of everything the school does, coupled with their innovative approaches to much of the school's work, have ensured that good standards have been maintained. The school's website for example, is used extremely well as a learning platform for children, parents and carers. The pupils benefit very well from excellent links with other schools and agencies, in particular the first school.

Achievement is outstanding. Pupils enter Year 4 with skills that are below the expected levels for their age. They consistently attain standards that are above average by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science and this is similar to test results in the last three years. Although standards are good, writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics and is therefore a continuous focus for further development. Standards in Year 7 remain above those expected, despite the high mobility factor in this year group. A significant number of pupils leave at the end of Year 6 to join secondary schools, and new ones arrive from other schools to take their place.

Pupils make outstanding progress because of the consistently high quality of teaching and learning across the school. Teachers plan well and the more able pupils are successfully challenged. Special attention is given to pupils new to learning English, or those who find learning difficult, so that they achieve as well as their peers. Raising achievement of the Black African pupils, particularly the boys, has been a specific focus in the school. Various successful strategies such as, support from the Somali Parent Ambassador; Winning Attitudes Workshops run by the consultants; and the use of relevant teaching materials and staff training are impacting greatly on the Black African pupils' performance. Pupils of all abilities are set challenging targets which they generally achieve or exceed, so that by the time they leave school, their achievement in relation to their starting points is outstanding. They are prepared very well for the next stage in their education.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. Pupils rapidly grow in confidence and develop a better understanding of themselves and others as they move through the school. They behave extremely well and clearly enjoy their time in school, as their consistently above average attendance reflects. Pupils play a significant part in helping to run the school smoothly through their roles as Eco Warriors, Buddies, Prefects and School Councillors. Charity work and other excellent links with the community, further enhance their social awareness. They feel safe in school. 'We can use the Thought Bubble Box if worried and get help from the learning mentors', said one. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. Many pupils make use of the extensive range of sports clubs before and after school. They have a secure understanding of other cultures and world religions.

Pupils benefit well from the outstanding curriculum, which promotes their creativity, and very effectively responds to pupils' varied needs and interests and provides a good basis for pupils' work in secondary schools. Very skilful links are made across different subjects to make it rich and stimulating. For example, in geography, pupils enjoy exploring the African culture through music, dance, art, and visiting authors. Appropriate action is being taken to extend the opportunities for pupils' to practise writing in different subjects. The school's involvement with enterprise projects and links with external international businesses, provide pupils with broader vision of what they might do later in life.

The outstanding quality of care guidance and support ensures that pupils are safe and do well. Teaching assistants and the learning mentors provide excellent extra support to pupils who find work difficult. Through very thorough and regular assessments, and joint planning meetings, staff ensure continuity of high quality support and skilful interventions throughout the school. They give excellent feedback to pupils on how well they are doing and involve them fully in assessments. Consequently, pupils are aware of what the next step in their learning should be, and this contributes to them becoming independent learners and their high academic standards.

The way in which the senior leaders and staff work together to continually evaluate how well the school is performing, is one key to its success. They carefully identify areas for improvement. For example, the school's self evaluation has indicated the need to focus on extending pupils' writing across other subjects. In addition, they can show that their actions have a very positive impact on raising pupils' achievements. Senior staff also ensure that, in all subjects the system for monitoring pupils' performance is being used to its best effect. As a result, teachers are helped to target work more precisely in order to maximise pupils' progress. This is being done extremely well with increasing use made of setting and providing different work for pupils of different abilities. The capacity to make even further improvement is excellent. Governance is good. Their careful financial management, particularly of the building project has meant that the budget surplus identified at the last inspection has been reduced to the permissible levels and appropriately monitored by the governors. Some governors are new. The school has identified the need to develop their role so that they are more fully involved in monitoring the school's performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their writing skills in other subjects.
- Strengthen the skills of the governing body to be more fully and strategically involved in monitoring the work of the school.

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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

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 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	1
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	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 interest of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

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 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

Annex B

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

05 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stag Lane Middle School, Edgware, HA8 5RU

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. You were all very helpful and polite. I thoroughly enjoyed looking at your work and speaking to you. It was great to find so many children who said that they like their school and think it is an excellent place to be. I agree with you. Your school is outstanding. Most of you make exceptional progress. I found children showing exemplary behaviour in and around the school. My working lunch with the school councillors and the prefects was very helpful. They told me all about the excellent things that the teachers plan to make all the lessons 'fun', and how well they look after you.

Here are some more things I like about your school:

- you are taught extremely well
- those of you who find work difficult get excellent support and make rapid progress
- everyone, including yourselves and your parents work well together as a great team and that means your school has tremendous opportunities to get even better
- your headteacher, the governors and the senior staff lead the school very well indeed. They are very keen for you all to always do your best.

Here is what I have asked your headteacher, the staff and the school's governors to do to improve further:

- give you more opportunity to write in other subjects and make your writing even better
- help the governors to be involved even more in checking the work of the school.

I hope that you will always enjoy your education as much as you do at Stag Lane School.

Yours sincerely

Raminder Arora
Lead Inspector

