

St John's Highbury Vale C of E Primary School

Conewood Street, Blackstock Road, London, N5 1DL

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher, school leaders and governors have very high expectations of staff and pupils. This has led to all pupils' outstanding attainment in English and mathematics, which is significantly above the national average at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Teachers and support staff are highly trained and supported to extend their knowledge and skills. They constantly strive to do their best and, as a result, teaching is consistently outstanding.
- Many children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve a good level of development, particularly in developing their communication and language skills by the time they leave Reception.
- Pupils are exceptionally motivated and eager to learn and are unreservedly polite and caring of one another. Their behaviour is exemplary.
- Excellent personal, spiritual, moral social and cultural development is at the heart of the school's success and underpins pupils' exemplary behaviour. Pupils feel extremely safe at school.
- Systems to manage staff performance are rigorous and are explicitly linked to securing pupils' rapid progress in English and mathematics.
- Middle leaders (those often responsible for subjects or aspects of the school) monitor the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in their subjects extremely well.
- The school is committed to encouraging pupils and their families to learn together, and the emphasis on home learning supports their excellent progress.
- The wide variety of topic themes and activities provided, including the after-school clubs and visits, ensure that pupils develop skills in a broad range of subjects and are very well prepared for their next stage of education.
- The governing body robustly holds the school to account for its performance and the management of its finances, and ensures that safeguarding is maintained to the highest standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, four of which were jointly observed with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Inspectors undertook a series of short visits to other lessons across the school and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors as well as representatives from the local authority and the London Diocesan Board for Schools.
- Inspectors took account of the 51 responses to the online Parent View survey as well as the views of the parents they met. Inspectors also considered the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including national test results and the school's own information about pupils' achievement, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding policies, and records and documents relating to staff performance.

Inspection team

Lesley Leak, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Kewal Goel

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school with one form of entry.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from other specific groups, is in line with the national average.
- A high proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is well above the national average. Very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is in line with the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency in the quality and quantity of marking and guidance provided for pupils across the curriculum to help them improve their work still further.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Many children enter Reception with skills appropriate for their age. As a result of high quality teaching, pupils make exceptional progress from their initial starting points. Pupils' achievement is strong throughout the school and exceptionally rapid in Years 2 and 6. As a result, by the time they leave, pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics is significantly above the national average and most reach above-average standards in writing.
- The national phonics (linking letters and sounds) check was above average for the past two years and is reflected in pupils' very secure reading skills. Pupils are encouraged to read every day and benefit from a well-equipped and stimulating library. Pupils who are less confident readers have good levels of help to develop their reading skills and soon catch up.
- Achievement in mathematics is outstanding because of the way the subject is expertly led and managed. All of the staff have strong subject knowledge, resulting from high quality training, and together with the home-learning provision, 'mathletics', this has led to rising standards.
- The school's focus on extended writing, 'Big Write', is having a strong impact on pupils' rapid progress in English because pupils are taught to prepare and plan well for their writing in advance.
- The school's efforts to accelerate the progress of pupils, especially high attainers, in Years 1 to 6 in reading, writing and mathematics have been effective in securing the highest attainment levels. For example, nearly a third of pupils secured Level 6 in mathematics last year, levels normally associated with secondary-aged pupils.
- Adults who provide one-to-one tuition and small-group interventions for pupils in need of extra help, including pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are well trained and highly effective in the role. They make a very strong contribution to pupils' exceptional progress.
- Pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium funding initiative make more progress in English and mathematics than do all pupils nationally. Only a very small number of pupils are supported through the pupil premium funding in Year 6, but any gaps in the achievement of this group of pupils in English and mathematics, compared to all other pupils, are closing rapidly. This is because funding for pupils supported through the pupil premium has been spent on meeting the needs of identified pupils through very well-targeted one-to-one support and small-group teaching within lessons.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers create a stimulating and welcoming learning environment which promotes high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and know their classes extremely well.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff provide a stimulating, happy learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, where children quickly become confident and eager learners. All teachers and support staff in Reception challenge children well by developing their use of vocabulary and numeracy skills, thereby ensuring that pupils make a confident, smooth transition to Year 1. For example, in one very successful lesson, teachers ensured that pupils knew how many sides, corners and faces there were to a range of three-dimensional shapes. As a result, the children became fascinated by the differences between trilateral and quadrilateral pyramids.
- Teachers use high-quality resources which are well matched to pupils' abilities and needs, to engage their interests. . In a particularly successful Year 5 lesson, pairs of pupils evaluated the probability of securing certain numbers when two dice are thrown at the same time. Appropriately challenged by these practical problem-solving activities, most pupils described the chances of securing a particular combination of numbers, as a fraction.

- Adults who support pupils in need of additional help, including pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are well trained and highly effective in their role. They make a very strong contribution to pupils' exceptional progress.
- Teaching caters very well for higher-attaining pupils by providing them with more demanding work when needed. The most able pupils question their own ideas and deepen their thinking skills, helped through the use of a 'Philosophy for Children' course. Together with the consistently outstanding teaching they receive, this helps them to make accelerated progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers regularly mark and assess pupils' work. They frequently provide useful guidance about how pupils could improve their work, especially in English and mathematics, but sometimes pupils do not respond to this guidance to improve their work further.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally polite and courteous to each other and there is a very strong community feeling to the school, where everyone is friendly and they know each other well. It is generally acknowledged by the school community, past and present, that friends made at this school are 'friends for life'.
- Pupils have strong social skills. They are eager to learn and are highly motivated. They get on extremely well together and respond positively to adults, and this contributes to their successful learning.
- Pupils value the many opportunities to take on important roles and responsibilities, such as being on the school council, helping in the library or supporting younger pupils. For example, they speak highly of the part they play in organising sports activities and events to raise money for charity.
- Robust behaviour routines are well established and any infrequent incidents of 'off-task' behaviour are managed effectively by the teachers and support staff. As a result, attitudes to learning are exemplary.
- Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and learn about internet safety. Pupils say that on the very rare occasions when bullying does occur it is dealt with swiftly by the school. Pupils have a clear understanding of the risks in life beyond school, including through the use of the internet-based devices.
- Pupils are very happy at school and, consequently, their attendance is above average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Staff and the governing body undertake regular high-quality risk assessments of the site to check that pupils are kept safe. Pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that they feel extremely safe and very well cared for.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher communicates very high expectations and ambition for improving the school supported by highly skilled senior and middle leaders, resulting in significantly rising standards and improvement in the school's effectiveness since its last inspection.
- Underpinning the school's highly positive picture of rising pupil achievement is the strength of its systems for monitoring pupils' progress linked closely to the management of staff performance. The checks on teaching are rigorous and ensure that challenging targets are set in relation to pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders provide valuable guidance to teachers about effective ways to learn different subjects. This has led to better activities pitched at the right level across the ability range, especially in mathematics. They have carefully monitored and evaluated the impact of new approaches to teaching on pupils' progress to ensure that they have correctly identified the

strengths and areas for development.

- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for high-quality learning and is successfully broadened by imaginative topic work that promotes literacy skills; classes in languages such as French, Mandarin and Spanish; art, music, sports and 'Philosophy for Children'. The curriculum is further enriched by in- and out-of-school visits and residential trips. New approaches to mathematics and English are assisting pupils to learn more effectively than previously.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in activities that promote their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. Christian morals and values underpin the life of the school and are reinforced by the regular 'value of the week' assemblies.
- The school is highly successful in engaging parents, who benefit from 'in-house' workshops to help them to support their children at home with their homework. Consequently, pupils' home-learning books present a highly effective way for pupils to reinforce what they have learned in school.
- The school makes good use of the additional funding it receives for sport by employing two sports coaches, who have broadened the range of sports available such as by introducing golf and tag rugby. Senior leaders, including the governors, are monitoring participation rates in sports activities after school to ensure that as many children as possible are involved.
- The school has a strong partnership with the local authority and the London Diocesan Board and welcomes the support and challenge they provide when it is requested.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The work of the governing body has contributed to the excellent quality of education the school provides. Governors are committed and well trained to perform their roles. They hold leaders to account robustly and successfully for all aspects of the school's performance and have developed close links with parents and carers. They are fully involved in the life of the school and regularly arrange themed governor days where they observe aspects of teaching and talk to staff and pupils about their activities. Governors manage the resources of the school very effectively. In particular, they ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively to support the pupils it is provided for to enable them to make rapid progress and close the gaps with other pupils. Governors make sure that the system for managing the performance of staff is robust and linked closely to pay for teachers and senior leaders. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities and ensures that all requirements are met and effective in relation to the safeguarding of children.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100440
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	431298

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jennifer James
Headteacher	Troy Sharpe
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2009
Telephone number	020 722 64906
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