

Columbia Primary School

Columbia Road, Bethnal Green, London, E2 7RH

Inspection dates 2–3 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points to reach standards in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress by the time they leave is rising and standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similarly good progress to their classmates, as do disadvantaged pupils.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are well supported by a strong governing body who have high expectations. All are equally committed to improving the education and achievement of all pupils in the school.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and manage pupils' behaviour well.
- Children get off to a strong start in the Nursery and Reception classes because teaching is good. Children settle quickly and learn how to play and work together harmoniously.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy all aspects of school life. They have positive attitudes towards their learning and work hard. They feel safe in school and well looked after by the adults around them.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of learning opportunities which make a strong contribution to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Parents are very positive about the school and are confident that their children are safe and well looked after.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The overall quality of teaching is not outstanding. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Some children in the Nursery and Reception classes do not use their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) well enough to make rapid progress in reading and writing.
- School improvement planning does not help leaders and governors to check regularly on the improvements made in teaching and pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed lessons involving pupils from all year groups across a range of subjects, six of which were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also looked at pupils' written work with senior leaders and children's work from the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 1 to 3. They met with two groups of pupils and spoke to pupils informally in lessons and around the school about their learning and behaviour. The inspectors also visited a singing assembly, attended by parents.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, staff, governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also spoke informally to parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the improvement plan, the school's assessment information for different groups, teaching records and the school's arrangements for safeguarding.
- The views of 83 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were analysed, together with 54 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Linda Pickles, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Olson Davis	Additional Inspector
Nicholas Capron	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school, with two classes in each year group. There are two Nursery classes, which most children attend part time, and two Reception classes, which children attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, is well above the national average.
- About a quarter of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average. Almost half of pupils are from a Bangladeshi background.
- Over half of pupils speak English as an additional language. This proportion is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school provides a nurture group, the 'School House', for a small number of pupils who have difficulties managing their behaviour.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013 and some leaders were newly appointed in September 2014.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to outstanding to further raise pupils' achievement, particularly in writing, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length across a range of subjects
 - giving clear guidance to pupils about how to improve their writing, and providing more opportunities for all pupils to check and improve their work
 - ensuring phonics skills are taught and checked more thoroughly in the Early Years Foundation Stage so children make more rapid progress in developing reading and writing skills.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - introducing more precise milestones and success measures in the school improvement plan so they can be used to check closely the impact of actions taken over time.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, including governors, have successfully tackled the areas for improvement which were identified at the last inspection. The new headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of the school community; his high expectations and drive for continuous improvement are shared and understood by all staff. Middle leaders, such as those in charge of subjects, some of whom are new to their positions, understand their roles and are being well supported by senior leaders to develop their leadership skills.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of the school's work because systems for self-evaluation are very thorough. The headteacher has accurately identified that progress in writing is not as rapid as in reading and mathematics, and that the teaching of phonics for the youngest children needs strengthening. The school has recently changed its approach to how phonics is taught but it is too soon to see the impact of this action.
- There are robust systems in place to check the progress made by different groups of pupils and to hold teachers to account for their pupils' achievement. Senior leaders recognise that improvement plans do not provide enough numerical measures during the year and this is not helping them to check the impact of the actions they are taking to improve teaching and achievement.
- Systems to carry out checks on teaching, set challenging targets and manage the performance of all staff are thorough and, as a result, teaching and pupils' progress continue to improve. Targets set for teachers are closely linked to pay progression.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and is embedded in the school's values and subjects taught. Assemblies and displays around the school promote pupils' respect and consideration for others. As one of the younger pupils said, 'The Year 6 pupils look after us.'
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain because they learn about a wide range of cultures and faiths. Tolerance, respect and other British values are promoted well across all year groups. The school ensures equality of opportunity and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils through focused teaching groups as well as by providing support for parents to help them with their child's learning. As a result, these pupils make good progress and achieve similar standards to other pupils nationally.
- Additional government funding to improve pupils' participation in sporting activities and develop sporting skills has been used effectively. The employment of a sports coach has increased teachers' confidence in the teaching of physical education, and pupils' participation in a range of sports, such as handball, yoga and badminton, has significantly increased. Pupils regularly participate in competitive sporting events with other schools.
- The curriculum is well organised around various themes which reflect pupils' experiences and interests, and is securely focused on teaching reading, writing and mathematics. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length and for a range of purposes across all subjects. Trips to local places of interest, such as the British Museum and the Museum of Childhood, are regular and make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement and positive attitudes towards their learning. As one pupil said, 'We are encouraged to be creative; I love doing drama.'
- Links with parents and carers are well established and extremely positive. Parents are very supportive of the school and are increasingly becoming involved with their child's learning through parent workshops on topics such as phonics and safety on the internet. Senior leaders are reviewing with parents the school's approach to homework. A very small minority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire do not agree that their child receives appropriate homework.
- The school works well with other local schools to check the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' work and to develop the new curriculum.
- The local authority supports the school well, for instance by checking senior leaders' judgements about teaching and achievement. The local authority rightly recognises that the school is able to lead its own improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring many professional skills from a range of backgrounds and are able to provide high levels of challenge and support to senior leaders. They can speak confidently about how well the school is performing compared to other schools nationally and have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and improvement priorities. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school, and the introduction of governors linked to different aspects of the school's work, for example pupils' achievement, has increased the rigour of governor visits against the priorities in the improvement plan.

- They know about the quality of teaching and make sure that the systems for managing the performance of staff links closely to how well pupils achieve. Governors ensure that additional money, including the pupil premium and primary sports funding, is used effectively to help pupils achieve well.
- Governors have undertaken training in safeguarding and have checked that all statutory requirements in relation to child protection and safeguarding arrangements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good, both in lessons and around school. This is a happy school where pupils from many different cultures and backgrounds work and play together in harmony. They are keen to work hard, and enjoy sharing and listening to each other's ideas. As a result, standards are rising and progress is accelerating.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive, and pupils respond quickly to teachers' guidance and instructions in lessons. Routines are well established in classrooms and very little time is wasted when pupils move between activities.
- Pupils typically behave well in lessons and have good attitudes to learning. Behaviour is not outstanding because pupils' attitudes are not yet consistently excellent across all classes and year groups.
- There is a strong sense of community in the school, and older pupils, who are part of the 'friendship squad', regularly help and play with younger pupils and supervise movement around school at lunchtime. Pupils speak positively about the reward of 'golden time' for behaving well and are extremely enthusiastic about 'golden day', where they are allowed to choose from a range of enjoyable activities.
- Pupils enjoy being in school, and this is shown by their average and improving attendance. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has significantly reduced in the last year.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Those spoken to said that bullying incidents are rare and that staff manage them well. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying and bullying related to social media and the internet.
- Safeguarding policies are in place, and procedures are understood and followed by staff. Training is comprehensive and regularly updated. All parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, believe that their children are kept safe at school. Behaviour and safety in the breakfast club are good.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good, with some that is outstanding. As a result, pupils make good progress and leave the school well prepared for the next phase of their education. The school records show that teaching has remained strong since the last inspection and teachers new to the profession are effectively supported.
- Teachers plan lessons that motivate and engage pupils. Increasingly, links in learning are being made across different subjects and this helps pupils to learn well. Teachers give pupils regular opportunities to discuss and reflect upon their learning with each other, which promotes their speaking and listening skills well and makes a good contribution to the language development of pupils who do not speak English at home. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilful in asking questions which challenge and extend pupils' thinking and understanding.
- Teaching of mathematics is strong because there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to real-life situations and teachers model strategies for approaching tasks. Pupils make good use of the visual prompts to remind them of what to do and make good use of mathematical equipment to support their learning. For example, pupils in a Year 2 class made good progress in their learning using equipment to subtract three digit numbers. This good use of resources helped them to develop confidence in the strategy they were using and they did not need adult help.
- Staff help pupils to make good progress in their reading. The books chosen interest pupils and motivate them to read. Pupils are keen to record their reading in their reading journals and have regular

opportunities to read and discuss books and texts which contribute effectively to their competent reading skills. The teaching of phonics begins in Nursery and this is contributing to improved attainment in reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- Pupils write regularly but teachers do not give them enough opportunities to complete longer pieces of writing, and in different genres, across subjects. Pupils' written work is regularly marked and pupils usually respond to teachers' comments. Marking, however, does not consistently provide clear enough guidance for pupils about the small steps they need to make to improve their written work further and pupils do not routinely check their writing before it is marked. As a result, their progress in writing is slower than that in reading and mathematics.

The achievement of pupils is good

- By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, most have reached average standards in English and mathematics, which represents good progress from their starting points. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 6 national tests in spelling, grammar and punctuation was above average in 2014.
- Almost all pupils make the progress they should in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave school. The proportion of pupils making better than expected progress is increasing across all subjects, but not as rapidly in writing.
- The most-able pupils make good progress and, by the end of Year 6, achieve high standards in all subjects. This is because they are given challenging work which extends their knowledge and understanding. As a result, an increasing number achieve at the higher levels in all subjects and some pupils achieved at the highest level in reading and mathematics in 2014. White British and Bangladeshi pupils reached standards in line with similar groups nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points, including those pupils who attend the nurture group. This is because adults provide good support for them in lessons and tasks are adapted to help them with their learning. Pupils achieve well in the nurture group because they enjoy working together and the planned activities interest them.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils, supported by pupil premium funding, made similar progress to other pupils in their class and better progress than other pupils nationally. Compared to national standards, gaps are closing across all subjects and Year 6 pupils ended the year four months behind other pupils nationally in reading and eight months behind in writing and mathematics. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates increased slightly in 2014 in mathematics and reading because of improved attainment of other pupils at the higher levels.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 is rising and was above national levels across all subjects in 2014, significantly so in mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that writing attainment in Key Stage 1 is not as high as that in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' knowledge of phonics is improving due to the improvements in the teaching of this aspect but is not yet improving rapidly enough for the youngest pupils. The proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2014 was below national levels.

The early years provision is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language. Children with a first language other than English, who attend the Nursery, make good progress in developing their fluency of spoken English because they are well supported by the adults around them.
- Children achieve well because the learning environment is stimulating and reflects children's backgrounds and interests. Staff consistently apply routines so children settle quickly and respond well to teachers' instructions. They move safely around the indoor and outdoor areas and have good levels of supervision from the adults who work with them and know them well.
- Good teaching helps children to achieve well and an increasing proportion of children are reaching a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1. Leaders know which areas need to improve because they check the effectiveness of their work. Recent changes have been made to the way phonics is taught and all staff have attended relevant training, but it is too soon to see the impact of these changes. The early years leader recognises that children's achievement in reading and writing needs to improve to

match that of other areas of learning, which are above national levels.

- Staff work well as a team and use the children's 'learning journey' profiles effectively to promote good communication between home and school. As a result, parents are fully involved in their children's learning.
- The school has improved the quality of the outdoor learning environment since the previous inspection and children now have more space to climb and use wheeled toys, which supports their good physical development. The good range of play and learning activities contributes well to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children from many different cultures and backgrounds enjoy working and playing together.

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	100897
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	444098

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	433
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Russell
Headteacher	Oliver Woodward
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2009
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