

George Eliot Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	101115
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	376512
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2012
Lead inspector	Barnard Payne

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	457
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elaine El-Essawy
Headteacher	Beatrix Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 September 2007
School address	Marlborough Hill London NW8 0NH
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mirella Lombardo Additional Inspector

Barnard Payne Additional Inspector

Evelyn Riley Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent 10 hours and 45 minutes observing 23 lessons taught by 17 teachers. They listened to pupils read in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and analysed pupils' work in books randomly selected from across the school. They also held meetings with a randomly selected group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and members of staff with leadership and management responsibilities. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's plans, key policies and performance data. They also analysed the responses from 333 questionnaires from parents and carers, 212 questionnaires from pupils and 35 questionnaires from staff.

Information about the school

This is a large school compared to the average-sized primary school. A high proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups, representing a wide variety of backgrounds, and most speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is above average, including those who are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. The school's provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is comprised of a Nursery and two Reception classes.

George Eliot Primary School was formed following the amalgamation of the junior and feeder infant school in January 2011. The headteacher of the junior school took on the role of acting headteacher at the infant school prior to the amalgamation. The previous inspection report referred to later in this report relates to the junior school. The school has achieved the Rights Respecting Schools, Healthy School status and International School (Bronze) awards. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- George Eliot Primary is an outstanding school. It is exceptionally effective in enabling pupils to reach high standards in English and mathematics, including the high proportion of pupils that start school with little or no spoken English.
- The school successfully closes any gaps in attainment between its many different groups of pupils because it makes excellent use of assessment information to support each group, including those with special educational needs and the most able pupils. As a result, achievement is outstanding.
- The school’s leaders have set very high expectations for staff and teaching is outstanding. There is a shared understanding of what is expected and teaching is kept under regular review. Highly effective assessment systems lead to clear targets for pupils, who are equally committed to reaching the highest standards. There is outstanding teaching across the school, but a little inconsistency in Key Stage 1, where very occasionally the outcomes of learning are not clear enough in the planning for each group of pupils.
- Pupils’ behaviour is exemplary. They find the lessons fun and interesting and, consequently, display extremely positive attitudes to learning. They are very mature in managing their own behaviour and this is supported significantly by the school’s innovative curriculum, which provides excellent opportunities for focused debate. Pupils feel very safe and well cared for. Attendance is in line with the national average but is on a sustained upward trend.
- The school’s leadership and management inspire a shared vision for the school that is highly ambitious for its pupils. Performance management of staff is very effective in improving teaching. This has led to sustained high standards and outstanding progress for pupils. The school’s promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional; its curriculum development has ensured that pupils significantly broaden their view of the world and consider ethical and moral issues with great confidence.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that, by December 2012, there is complete consistency in the clarity of learning intentions for all groups of pupils in lessons at Key Stage 1 so that they know what is expected of them.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils make outstanding progress as they move up through the school. The vast majority of parents and carers agree that their children achieve well. Pupils learn exceptionally well, showing great resilience and a willingness to undertake progressively demanding work. They make rapid progress in reading and writing, making an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Many children start school with low levels of skills, particularly in using English and number, but they have excellent opportunities to read, write and count. They make outstanding progress so that by the end of Reception, their skills are just below average.

Children make a very good start with reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In a Reception class, for example, in a lesson focused on blending sounds and using more complex words, children were keen to answer questions and use their knowledge of phonics to sound out and spell simple words and form simple sentences. They really enjoyed the fun and challenge. A reader in Reception read *Jack and the Beanstalk* fluently, taking note of punctuation. Staff ensure that children of all abilities are able to make the same rates of progress, with many rapidly catching up from lower starting points.

By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, showing that the rate of progress is sustained. A highly effective phonics programme leads to pupils continually building their confidence in reading and writing. A very able Year 2 reader was fluent and expressive, using her knowledge of phonics to read words such as 'scientific', 'tongue', 'meteor' and 'excited'. A less able reader in Year 2 says he has 'always struggled with words', but showed the ability to sound out words such as 'reached' and 'slipped'.

Pupils continue to make rapid progress in Key Stage 2 and overall attainment is well above average. The school has sustained high rates of progress in English and mathematics year on year. All groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those that speak English as an additional language, make excellent progress. Attainment in mathematics is exceptionally high and the percentage reaching the higher Level 5 significantly exceeds the national figure. This year the school has entered some pupils for the level 6 test, which is two levels higher than the expected level. All groups make outstanding progress in

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mathematics. In a Year 6 lesson with a lower set, for example, pupils had the confidence to devise their own answers to questions such as, 'The discount is £20 – what was my question?' They aspired to work at the highest levels they could.

Pupils' reading and writing skills by Year 6 are particularly impressive. Standards in reading are well above average and the school has entered some pupils for the Level 6 test. Pupils demonstrate a wide range of strategies when reading, including the higher-order skills of inference and deduction. Pupils comment on the high quality of advice they receive to support their reading, including regular checks to ensure books are at the right level and the identification of reading targets. Pupils also show ambition in their writing, using adventurous vocabulary and complex sentences. One pupil opened a story with "Timmy! Timmy! Come back", whimpered Jake in horror, as his loving canine zoomed to the end of the woods." Another pupil, writing from three different viewpoints, included "How could I leave them? What was I thinking? It feels as if a volcano has erupted inside me."

The achievement of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is also outstanding. Their progress is meticulously tracked by highly trained staff and the school has devised an excellent programme of intervention in English and mathematics. The school's systematic phonics programme and a Key Stage 2 'catch-up' numeracy programme have had a significant impact.

Quality of teaching

Inspectors found that teaching is outstanding because it systematically addresses pupils' needs, particularly in developing their literacy and numeracy skills, and sets consistently high levels of challenge. Almost all parents and carers agree that their children are taught well. Teachers' use of assessment information is excellent and procedures involve pupils in assessing their own and other pupils' work and setting specific personalised targets. The wide range of teaching strategies used include effective links between subjects, which helps pupils to see the relevance of their learning.

Teachers and support staff generate high levels of enthusiasm for learning. In a spelling test in a Year 3 lesson, for example, the clarity of purpose, high expectations, embedded routines, targeted questioning and the match of work to pupils' needs combined to make an outstanding learning experience. The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is highly effective in all contexts, including support in class, small group and individual support sessions. In Key Stage 1, there are rare occasions where learning intentions are not clear enough for each group, which means that although all pupils make gains in knowledge, some could do more.

Teachers are skilled at engaging pupils in ethical and moral issues, considering, for example, the impact of air travel on the environment against the needs of a banana grower who has to get his produce to market. Philosophy is taught throughout Key Stage 2, which enables pupils to consider values and ethics and develop higher-order

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thinking skills. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils' responses to a video clip included 'Should we always learn from our mistakes?' and 'Is it sometimes right to take things that don't belong to us?'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Exceptional standards of behaviour have been maintained over time due to a consistently applied behaviour policy and very high expectations. Most parents and carers agree that there is a good standard of behaviour and that the school deals with any cases of bullying effectively. Pupils develop very mature attitudes, significantly helped by a curriculum that instils clear values and promotes focused debate. It is very noticeable, for example, that pupils listen to one another well and speak with high levels of respect, even when they disagree with what someone has said. Pupils play a significant role in managing behaviour through their own attitudes and through well-established systems that include mediation meetings, where any problems are resolved collaboratively. They say that bullying is very rare and virtually all pupils returning questionnaires agreed that the school deals with all types of bullying well.

Pupils are extremely courteous and ensure the school is a very well ordered environment. Virtually all parents and carers agree that their children feel safe in school and all pupils returning questionnaires say they feel safe. They also learn to keep themselves safe outside school through a variety of learning opportunities. Attendance shows sustained and convincing improvement over time because the school uses a variety of effective strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Leadership and management

The school's leaders are passionate about the school and share very high aspirations. Expectations of staff and pupils are very clear and the school's highly effective performance management of staff includes the regular monitoring of teaching, leading to clear targets for improvement. This has led to a high degree of consistency. Professional development has played a very significant role in the school's improvement. Staff are well informed, keeping abreast of current innovations in education, and leaders and managers seek new ideas from a variety of sources. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and the insistence that all pupils will achieve high standards underpins everything the school does. As the headteacher says, 'These children are the future of London.' When the junior school was previously inspected, it was judged to be good; all aspects have improved since that time, even though the school has had to manage the amalgamation with the infant school. Improvements show a clear upward trend and aspirations are high, demonstrating a strong capacity to improve further. Governors have developed their role; they play an active part in strategic decision making and are fully committed to the school's vision.

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The curriculum has been very carefully devised to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with a high emphasis on communication, reading, writing and mathematical skills. Pupils develop their thinking and enquiry skills to a high level, which has an impact in other subjects. The school's adoption of the International Primary Curriculum was in response to an analysis of pupils' needs; the school judged that many pupils had few opportunities to develop a global view. Subsequently, links have been established with very different schools in Bangladesh and the United Kingdom and pupils explore a wide range of issues, using skills developed in other subjects.

The school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult. Almost all parents and carers agree that the school helps them to support their children's learning. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of George Eliot Primary School, London NW8 0NH

We really enjoyed visiting your school. You were extremely helpful to us, explaining what you were learning and sharing your views. Thank you also for completing the questionnaires; these confirm your very positive views of the school. You attend an outstanding school and reach high standards in English and mathematics. The school is very successful in making sure that no-one gets left behind. Your achievement is outstanding. The teaching in your school is excellent and teachers plan lessons so that they are fun; they also make outstanding use of assessment, including involving you in assessing your own and other pupils' work.

Your behaviour is exemplary and you develop very mature attitudes to managing your own behaviour. We know that you feel very safe and well cared for. Your attendance is in line with the national average but is on an upward trend, and has improved over time. The school provides you with learning opportunities that significantly broaden your view of the world and you discuss ideas with real confidence and maturity.

You may be thinking that there cannot be anything for the school to improve, and there is not much. We have found that teaching in Key Stage 1 is very occasionally not quite as effective as it could be and we have asked the school to make sure that learning intentions in Key Stage 1 lessons are always clear for each group of pupils, so that they can do even better.

The school is committed to achieving this by December 2012. Otherwise, I can only ask you to carry on doing what you are already doing! I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barnard Payne
Lead inspector

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