

Timbercroft Primary School

Timbercroft Lane, Plumstead, London, SE18 2SG

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The focus on school improvement has had an impact, particularly in raising pupils' attainment since the previous inspection. Progress is particularly strong in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good because it promotes strong relationships with pupils and high expectations of their learning. Teachers use long-term checks on pupils' progress to plan exciting activities relevant to their needs in most cases.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and as a result they get on well with and respect each other.
- Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They know how to keep safe, care for each other and have no concerns about bullying.
- Senior leaders guide the school well because they know clearly what needs to be done. A clear focus on improving pupils' achievement and teaching has led to the school's improved effectiveness since the previous inspection.
- Governors use their thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development to ensure that senior leaders are not complacent about possible future improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in writing are not always high enough because pupils do not use letters and the sounds they make (called phonics) as well as they do in reading and this affects their ability to spell accurately.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not always have the materials and resources they need to help them write more interesting sentences.
- A very small proportion of teaching is not yet of the highest quality, as in some lessons the work set is either too easy or too difficult, which hinders the progress of some pupils.
- Occasionally, teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not ensure that children fully understand what they are doing before they move on to other activities.

Information about this inspection

- Twenty four lessons were observed, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher or acting deputy headteacher. Each class was observed at least once. Inspectors also observed senior leaders reporting back to teachers on the quality of learning and pupils' achievement in lessons. Inspectors observed children playing at lunchtime and playtime.
- Inspectors listened to a group of pupils reading from Year 2 and Year 6.
- Inspectors had discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, middle leaders, all teaching staff and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentary evidence, including the school's records of pupils' progress; documents relating to health and safety and staff vetting procedures; special educational needs; the school's checks on its progress; and priorities for further improvement.
- Pupils' written work within books and around the school was scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 15 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's 'Parent View' online survey as well as the school's most recent survey of parents' and carers' opinions and results of 46 staff questionnaires. Inspectors met some parents and carers informally at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Rebekah Iiyambo, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an above average sized primary school.
- The school leadership team has an acting deputy headteacher who has recently been promoted from the post of assistant headteacher within the school.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than most schools.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught within one unit called 'Oak' which consists of Nursery and Reception classes.
- An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for additional national funding called the 'pupil premium'.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with those of African heritage making up the next largest group.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing to match their achievement in reading and mathematics by:
 - providing younger pupils with materials and resources that help them practise and improve the fluency of the sentences they write
 - giving older pupils more guidance about how to use their good phonic skills to improve the quality of their spelling and enable them to be more confident to write creatively and at length.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring teachers use checks on pupils' progress during lessons more frequently so they can match the learning more accurately to the differing abilities of pupils so they achieve more rapidly
 - helping the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to spend more time on specific activities within the outdoor area so that they use their skills they have learnt in more adult-directed work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' results in national tests in English and mathematics have shown a consistent rise over the past three years. The progress pupils make from entry into the school to Year 6 is generally good, given their starting points. It is not as strong in Year 4 because these pupils started at school with abilities that were much lower than typically found and are still making up for some past underachievement.
- Children have a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and they make good progress. Their early reading, writing and number skills develop well as activities are usually well planned and stimulating. The improved outdoor learning area provides a stimulating learning environment, but children are sometimes allowed to move from one activity to another before sufficiently developing or sustaining their independent learning skills.
- Pupils' progress in reading is strong so by the end of Year 2, and by the time they leave the school, they are confident readers. The school's wide range of activities successfully engages and challenges pupils' learning, even those who are not yet as good at reading as they could be.
- Pupils enjoy using internet-based learning at home and at school to develop their reading and comprehension skills. Sessions that involve parents and carers reading with their children are particularly effective at helping them experience many different high quality books, which they say 'makes reading special'.
- Teachers use long-term checks on pupils' progress to plan work that motivates pupils to learn and for the most part is matched closely to their different ability needs. The targets they set for pupils give clear guidance about how to improve their learning further.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that pupils identified make better progress than other pupils nationally. The school recently identified there were some differences in how well these pupils achieve compared to classmates, but these differences are reducing quickly, because staff more accurately identify their next steps for development.
- Writing has improved since the previous inspection across the school. However, there is room for improvement in developing pupils' confidence to write in Years 1 to 6. This is because pupils are not always confident to use their knowledge of letters and sounds to help them spell accurately or confidently.
- Pupils benefit from using internet-based websites and software well in both literacy and numeracy activities. For example, Year 5 pupils were given muddled-up sentences and used computers to rearrange them into sentences that make sense and they used coordinates on computer screens to 'find an alien'.
- Teaching assistants and other adults provide valuable support to groups needing an extra boost in their learning, and small group work and one-to-one tuition help pupils to make progress at a similar rate to their classmates.
- The work in pupils' books is well presented and shows that they take pride in their learning. Those identified at school action, school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs achieve well. These particular pupils make good progress in line with others because their needs are identified quickly and effective support is provided.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The proportion of well-taught lessons has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have higher expectations of their pupils, providing clear instructions about how to complete their work. In good or better lessons teachers use open-ended questions to challenge pupils to think more deeply about ideas within subjects. In an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson the teacher used work produced by pupils to model good examples of powerful writing. Although very few, there are occasional lessons which require improvement.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage (Oak building), children start confidently as their needs are identified quickly, especially when adults work alongside children, observing children closely and recording their progress. However, on occasions when children are leading their own learning through play they do not stay focused at activities for long enough, especially in the outside area.
- Opportunities for pupils to speak and listen to each other and their teachers are generally good. For example Year 1 pupils questioned 'little bear in the hot seat' and listened well to his answers about his feelings when he was in the forest alone at night. Older pupils working in pairs used high quality resources purposefully to find out facts about the Arthenians and the Spartans.
- At Key Stage 1 some pupils do not always have the right materials and resources, such as prompt sheets or examples, to extend their writing to higher standards.
- The teaching of reading is strong and skills are taught and practised regularly. The younger pupils learn to recognise letters and the sounds they make and use these skills well to tackle new or unfamiliar words.
- Pupils are interested and productive when reading in small groups. This is because well-established and organised routines allow them to experience a good number of independent activities that are well matched to their reading interests and ability. This stimulates and motivates the older pupils to persevere with more difficult levels of reading.
- The teaching of numeracy has improved because planning across different areas of mathematics is better, the match of work to pupils' ability and the quality of marking and feedback are good. In the best numeracy lessons pupils quickly engage in problem-solving activities.
- Teachers use assessment well to plan lessons for different ability groups. Occasionally, however, although teachers realise that some tasks they set are easily completed or too complicated, they allow the lesson to continue rather than reshaping the work so that pupils are more appropriately challenged to make better progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and are ambitious for the next stage of their education. They talk confidently about any behaviour that is occasionally unacceptable and say that rare incidents of bullying are managed well by adults.
- Some parents and carers raised issues about bullying. However, discussions with pupils showed that they understand about different types of bullying and how to stay safe. They confirmed that bullying was comparatively rare and usually properly resolved. Most parents and carers indicated that they felt behaviour was good in the school and that they felt listened to should difficulties arise. For example, one parent in the playground, at the beginning of the school day, stated that 'The school does everything it can to listen to parents.'
- Relationships across the school are strong and pupils are comfortable to work together for mutual benefit in the activities they follow. They are consistently polite, courteous and helpful to adults and each other.
- Adult support through counsellors and learning mentors for pupils is good. The school has close working relationships with a number of outside agencies to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. For example, pupils with behavioural needs are supported well through sessions that help develop their self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunity they are given to take on responsibility. For example, they are proud of their fundraising for various charities and their participation in the 'Green Team', which helps promote environmental awareness.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection as senior leaders and support staff have focused mainly on improving attendance for those pupils who find attending regularly more difficult.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher work well together to provide a good overview for the direction of the school. Senior leaders have identified areas for improvement and successfully worked on them so that weaknesses from the previous inspection have been remedied effectively, for example improvements in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders at all levels know the strengths and areas for development in the school, including the need to eliminate the very small proportion of teaching that requires improvement. Those leaders who are new to their role are supported effectively and are enthusiastic to use information on pupils' progress to target further areas for improvement.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Teamwork is promoted well and staff are already getting to grips with nationally revised ways of recording and assessing children's progress. Good links with parents and carers enable children to start confidently in their new surroundings.
- The checks on the performance of teachers and teaching assistants are thorough and regular. Staff are well supported and all teachers receive helpful feedback about how their work must focus on improving pupils' progress.
- Pupils, staff and school leaders get on well together and promote a harmonious and cohesive community through curriculum plans that embrace individual differences. Senior leaders ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to take part in all aspects of school life and that there is no discrimination.
- The curriculum for literacy, numeracy and personal development is well planned. This is one of the reasons why the pupils have such strong attitudes to learning. Leaders have correctly identified other areas of the curriculum that need to be taught with the same rigour, such as geography.
- Leadership of special educational needs work is effective. This is because the leader identifies pupils who are not making expected progress very quickly and ensures that they receive well-targeted adult support.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is strong. For example, Year 5 pupils wrote their own prayers for an assembly based on the life of Mary Seacole and Year 6 pupils wrote about their own Olympic and Paralympic dreams, 'As I run I feel determination, pain and passion!'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors play an important part in driving improvement. A specific sub-group looks in detail at the strengths and areas for development so that the whole governing body can compare their school performance data with that of other schools and challenge the school on issues, such as attainment in writing and progress of groups. Relationships are purposeful between the governing body, leadership team, staff and pupils. They are fully involved in the life of the school and have a good understanding about the quality of teaching, how weaknesses are tackled and how information is used in mirroring salary levels and progression to the quality of teaching present. Governors appreciate the involvement of the local authority in providing ongoing training so they fulfil their role more effectively. Governors have a clear understanding of how the pupil premium is used, for example in providing small-group work, extra staffing to teach pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and helping provide counsellors and learning mentors for specific pupils. The governing body has identified that governors occasionally need to record the outcomes of their visits to the school more carefully so it can gauge progress on issues more readily.

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	130922
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	402432

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	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stefan Algar
Headteacher	Jane Stephenson
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 October 2009
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