

Ben Jonson Primary School

Harford Street, Tower Hamlets, London, E1 4PZ

Inspection dates 13–14 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader, who is strongly supported by a talented leadership team, by knowledgeable and effective governors and by all the staff.
- The leadership and management of the school are highly effective. All aspects of its work are very carefully checked, including the progress pupils make. School leaders use this information to identify exactly the right actions to take to improve the school further.
- Very effective staff training and management of staff performance since the last inspection have resulted in teaching which is good overall; an increasing proportion is outstanding.
- Since the last inspection pupils' attainment has improved so that it now at least matches the national average.
- Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, pupils with special educational needs and pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium are all supported extremely well to make at least good progress.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel entirely safe. They get on very well with their teachers and each other and their behaviour is outstanding. This has a very positive effect on their learning and progress in lessons.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The overall quality of teaching is steadily improving, but not enough is yet outstanding. This is the main reason why pupils' achievement across the school is good rather than outstanding.
- In some lessons the work is not matched well enough to the needs of the different children in the class and is sometimes too easy for those that learn more quickly.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in English. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to other lessons.
- The seven responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the one email received during the inspection and feedback from meetings with parents and carers during the inspection were taken into account.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior and middle managers, the vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. The inspection team took account of the 26 questionnaires received from staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own data on recent and current progress, planning and monitoring information, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and the minutes of recent meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors observed pupils during play and lunchtimes and spoke with a good number of them about safety. They held more formal meetings with a group of pupils and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Barbara Firth, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Barbara Saltmarsh	Additional inspector
David Wolfson	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, with the largest group represented being of Asian heritage. The large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action and school action plus, or with a statement of special education needs, is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above that of similar schools nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the appointment of the current headteacher in January 2009 there have been a number of staff changes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that the work set by teachers is more closely matched to pupils' levels of ability and that the more-able pupils are consistently challenged
 - encouraging teachers to ask more open and complex questions to extend and deepen pupils' understanding
 - allowing those pupils that learn more quickly to start tasks before other learners.
- Raise pupils' achievement from good to outstanding, particularly in mathematics in Key Stage 2, by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan activities that require pupils to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects
 - check pupils' learning regularly during lessons and, when necessary, promptly move them on to the next task
 - provide more visual mathematical resources in the classrooms so that pupils can learn independently.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children begin the Reception Year with skills well below the expectations for their age. By the end of Year 6, their attainment is broadly in line with the national average and above average in English. Standards are improving.
- The proportion of pupils making the progress expected from their starting points is rising. In 2012, almost all pupils had made the expected progress by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils make outstanding progress during the Reception Year and in Key Stage 1 where standards are now significantly above the national average in both English and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 is more variable, and better in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- The achievement of pupils in reading is improving across the school. In 2012, although the proportion of pupils meeting the expected levels for phonics in Year 1 national assessments was below average, for the last two years, pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 2 has been average and, at the end of Key Stage 1, significantly above average. Inspectors observed very effective teaching in phonics lessons, which focused on the sounds letters make, and in guided reading lessons where pupils were observed reading competently on their own.
- Standards in writing at the end of Year 6 are now significantly above the national average with more pupils attaining higher-than-average levels.
- Standards in mathematics have improved since the previous inspection. However, fewer pupils reach Level 5 in mathematics than do in reading and writing. There are too few opportunities in other subjects for pupils to practise their mathematical skills and not enough visual material in the classrooms to help pupils think about mathematical problems on their own.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve at least as well as others because they are given very good support.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, ensuring pupils' overall good learning and progress. Examples of outstanding teaching were observed during the inspection.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons. They like and respect their teachers and have very positive attitudes to learning. They listen attentively, eagerly get down to work and enjoy the exciting learning opportunities that teachers provide in different subjects.
- When teaching is outstanding, tasks are well matched to individual ability, pupils are given opportunities to work independently and they learn rapidly. These qualities were observed in a lesson where the pupils were developing their understanding of the term 'mean' in order to find an average. Pupils were working in pairs on increasingly difficult tasks. The more-able pupils started with problems that were more challenging and therefore were able to advance their knowledge and understanding quickly. Pupils worked very well together and used each other to check their calculations while at the same time developing their speaking and listening skills.
- In a few lessons teachers' questions were not well-enough targeted to enable them to probe pupils' understanding or all pupils were expected to start at the same point even though some had already covered the topic. Teachers missed opportunities to move pupils quickly on to the next stage of their work.
- Teaching assistants are highly effective. Their well-developed skills are put to very good use to guide, support and improve the learning for pupils of all abilities.
- Marking gives pupils good opportunities to check their own learning and take action to improve it. They are increasingly encouraged to read and respond to their teachers' comments. This is particularly the case in writing.
- Teachers provide pupils with a curriculum that interests and entuses them and provides a good

range of opportunities for them to practise their reading and writing skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils play and learn in a highly positive and happy atmosphere. They are polite, well mannered and highly enthusiastic about their teachers, their learning and their school. Pupils told us that Ben Jonson is the best school in the country.
- Pupils said that their teachers make learning fun and this contributes well to the faster progress now evident in the school. Classrooms are typically calm, friendly and engaging.
- Pupils feel safe in school and they understand the different types of bullying. They believe that if bullying happens, teachers deal effectively with it. They know how to stay safe in a range of circumstances and when using computers and the internet.
- Pupils behave extremely well. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the online survey feel that behaviour is well managed and that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Parents and carers have good relationships with staff, appreciate the positive links between home and school and know that any concerns they may have will be rapidly addressed.
- Pupils' attendance at school has improved since the previous inspection and is now above the national average. This is due to the effective techniques the school has put in place to make sure that all pupils attend regularly, such as calling home if they are not at school. Very few pupils arrive at school late. The very well-attended and well-organised breakfast club provides a good beginning to the day for pupils of all ages and has helped to make sure pupils start school on time.
- The school fosters good relationships and ensures there is no discrimination.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and, together with her senior staff, has made considerable improvements since the previous inspection. The school's leadership has consistently pursued the goal of high performance in teaching and standards. All aspects of the school's work are very carefully checked, particularly the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Long-term planning addresses any weaknesses identified.
- All staff are fully involved in helping to improve the school further. They are very well motivated and keen to ensure that their own skills and practice develop rapidly too. To support this, all teachers, including newly qualified teachers, are involved in lesson observations.
- Pupils' progress is checked closely and frequently. Teachers show a good understanding of pupils' individual needs and use resources and additional support, including teaching assistants, well to improve pupils' achievement.
- The school has used the pupil premium to create smaller classes in Years 5 and 6 and improve resources, including the purchase of an extensive range of books for use in class and to take home, and a wider range of resources to support mathematics. School and national data show that those pupils supported through the pupil premium make good and sometimes outstanding progress to achieve at least in line with similar pupils nationally.
- The way that the headteacher and senior team check the quality of teaching is exceptional and leads to highly focused professional development for teachers and teaching assistants. Performance management is rigorous and individual targets are linked to pupils' progress and the Teachers' Standards.
- The well-crafted development plan is based on robust, regular, detailed and accurate self-evaluation and involves the whole staff and the governing body. The actions chosen are appropriate and their impact is evaluated through the year.
- The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is enriched with lessons by specialist teachers in art, information and communication technology, design and technology and music and a wide range of after-school

activities. Visits in the locality and residential trips abroad add further enhancement.

■ The local authority provides suitably light touch support for this good school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governors' detailed knowledge of pupils' achievement and of the quality of teaching and learning across the school enables them to play an active part in evaluating the school's work. Their effective contribution to managing staff performance ensures that all teachers are held to account for pupils' progress and governors are fully aware of the link between staff performance and salary progression. The governing body ensures that the pupil premium is spent wisely to help overcome barriers to learning. Governors have ensured that safeguarding procedures are rigorous and well documented. They keep their own knowledge and skills well developed and up to date so that they can check the school's work closely for themselves.

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	100890
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	400436

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	530
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Ray Hall
Headteacher	Melanie Rose
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 January 2010
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