

Gordon Infants' School

Golfe Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 1SU

Inspection dates 29–30 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.

- Pupils' attainment has significantly improved over the past two years. They make good progress as they move through the school, particularly in writing. Pupils enjoy writing for different purposes across a range of subjects.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to ensure pupils make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, feel safe there and behave well. The school celebrates its diverse range of languages and cultures during curriculum activities and assemblies.
- The professional development of teaching and support staff accurately targets areas of need and is linked well to school priorities.
- The ambition and drive for improvement of the headteacher inspires the staff. The tracking of pupils is effective and made a significant difference to mathematics achievement in 2012.
- The governing body supports and contributes to the work of the school well. Governors are involved in the effective monitoring of the school's work and in planning for its future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not consistently challenging enough for pupils, because the planned activities are sometimes delayed at the start of lessons.
- Teachers do not use the information they have about pupils' reading skills to guide the reading of those groups of pupils working independently of the teacher.
- Occasionally the pace of lessons in the Early Years Foundation Stage is too slow, reducing the amount of time available for activities that help pupils to think for themselves and take control of their own learning.
- Parents are not given sufficient opportunity to share and celebrate their children's learning.

Information about this inspection

- Eighteen lessons were observed, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made short visits to seven lessons. 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 lunch and playtime and listened to a sample of Year 2 pupils read.
- Inspectors had discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, all the 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, staff vetting procedures and special educational needs, documents on the school website, minutes of governing body meetings, local authority reports on the school, and the school's checks on its progress and priorities for improvement. Pupils' written work was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the responses of 15 parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's most recent survey of parents and carers and the results of 26 staff questionnaires. Inspectors met some parents and carers informally at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Rebekah Iiyambo, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Jim McVeigh

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized infant school.
- A very high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, some of whom are at the early stages of learning English.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are 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.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs identified at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than in most schools.
- The majority of pupils are of Pakistani heritage, with those of Indian and other Asian heritage making up the next largest groups.
- The school has the Primary Quality Mark for basic skills, awarded for the third time, May 2011 and Inclusion Quality Mark awarded, July 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - accelerating children's progress in lessons by getting pupils working quickly, reducing the amount of whole-class teacher explanation and asking questions that prompt pupils' thinking and learning
 - ensuring that adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not spend too much valuable learning time working with the whole class when children could be more profitably engaged in activities
 - encouraging teachers and support staff to share the 'Special Books' with parents and carers so that they can contribute to their children's learning at home.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading by:
 - building on staff's effective record keeping to plan and deliver effective reading sessions, particularly guided reading when groups work independently of the teacher
 - encouraging pupils, alongside their parents and carers, to experience a wider range of fiction and non-fiction reading books at school and at home.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection have resulted in pupils making good and improving progress from their starting points, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge which are generally well below the levels expected for their age. Their language skills are particularly poor. They get off to a good start developing communication skills through play.
- In Reception, teachers produce 'Special Books' that show the good progress children are making through selected pieces of work and photographic evidence of achievement. Unfortunately parents have not had sufficient access to these books to observe, celebrate and comment on their children's success at school and at home.
- Standards of reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 have been steadily rising each year. More-able Level 3 pupils perform particularly well. A significant number of pupils are able to write at length by the end of Key Stage 1. Year 2 books show neat writing, although not joined up, with complicated sentences and the use of adventurous vocabulary. One pupil started a story with: 'In the middle of the night, Thomas woke up and ...' He then wrote at length to describe a fire fighter in action.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are taught well and in the recent screening check a high proportion of pupils achieved above the national average.
- Pupils of all abilities confidently read books provided by school and school staff keep good records of pupils' reading achievement. However, when pupils chose their own books, their reading is not monitored well enough to challenge them to make full use of the skills they develop during adult-led sessions.
- A focus on mathematics over the past two years raised attainment in the subject to above the national average in 2012. The pupils now use a range of approaches to solve problems.
- Different groups of pupils make similar progress. For example, those from families who speak a language other than English at home quickly learn English and are able to make good progress in their reading and writing in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and those who arrive at different times of the school year make good progress. For example, one parent, new to the United Kingdom and the school, commented, 'My child has only been at the school for a few weeks and I'm really happy with how they are doing in school.'

The quality of teaching is good

- Overall, good teaching enables pupils to make good progress in their learning. A small amount of teaching was outstanding. The best teaching uses interventions by the teacher to refocus the pupils on the key learning within a lesson and lets pupils evaluate how well they and their classmates are doing. In the weaker lessons, teachers do not allow pupils enough time to work out things for themselves or learn from each other.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, adults are mindful of the need to extend the children's language skills by asking them open-ended questions, so they have to think. Inside and outside provision in these classes is good, with a broad range of stimulating activities that motivate and excite the children. When allowed to be independent, children initiate their own play and persevere with self-selected activities. For example, a Reception class child carefully constructed a symmetrical model of a robot and was excited to share it with adults and other children.
- In a small number of lessons, children listen for long periods or are asked to respond to

questions that require only 'yes' or 'no' answers and which do not encourage children to think for themselves. Occasionally, a teacher may spend too long time with an individual child, so that the pace of learning for the class as a whole slows down.

- Teachers plan well. They create opportunities for pupils to write in many different contexts and across a range of different subjects, which develops pupils' interest in, and stamina for, writing. For example, teachers encourage pupils to share their ideas with the whole class or with their neighbours before they start writing.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in phonics, literacy and numeracy is strong. They make good use of resources, such as word-building cards or web-based materials, that help pupils' confidence. For example, a Year 2 class made good use of computers to improve their spelling when word processing text about the Great Fire of London. The teacher's questions about why the red line appears under words helped them to identify words that needed correcting and stimulated pupils to use other key functions.
- Marking is regular and consistent, but pupils do not always have the chance to respond to comments made by teachers.
- Support staff are deployed well. Where teaching is most effective, teachers ensure that support staff know their role at all stages of a lesson and are well prepared to help in developing pupils' learning. In a Reception class, a disabled pupil was helped to move around the inside activities, such as painting, computer games and building blocks, and also had access to outside learning in the shop area.
- A nursery nurse, while playing alongside children in the outside water-play area, stimulated children to explore their own experiences of pouring water by making the water scented and coloured and providing access to different types of containers. However, this imaginative practice is not apparent throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, because some children are directed through activities too closely by adults.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy being at school and arrive with a smile on their faces. They behave well in lessons and as they move around the school. The behaviour ladder used in classes provides a good structure for pupils to modify their own behaviour. They try hard to avoid being placed in the 'orange zone' and as a result they know how behaviour rules must be observed.
- Year 1 and 2 pupils talk confidently about how teachers 'sort out' minor incidents of misbehaviour, such as snatching crayons or pencils in class. They know about different types of bullying and described some of the activities they experienced during anti-bullying week.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, especially when they are working independently at carefully planned and resourced activities. These attitudes to work contribute to the good progress they make.
- Relationships throughout the school's diverse community are very harmonious. Staff and pupils respect each other, so that pupils are confident to ask for help when they need it. This ensures they have time to think clearly about how to complete activities and to extend them to produce their best work. When in the playground, pupils get on well with each other.
- Pupils, parents and carers said that pupils feel safe and know whom to talk to if they feel sad. They were unanimous about how the school helps them to eat healthily.
- Attendance has improved year by year and now compares well with the national average. The school has worked hard to discourage parents from taking their children on long holidays abroad during school term time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is dynamic and has the determination and skill to continue developing a staff team committed to ensuring that the children make the best possible progress. The school shows that it has strong capacity to improve further because there has been a significant improvement in pupils' attainment and progress over the past two years.
- The school has accurately identified its weaknesses and has produced well-constructed plans to address them. These plans have all the information needed to support development, but the targets set are not measurable.
- Staff morale is high and staff share the senior leadership team's clear views about how successful the school can be. They are working well together to bring about improvement. Staff are proud of what has been achieved for the pupils.
- Senior and middle leaders are capable, have a clear and accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of their areas of responsibility and monitor well to ensure that different groups of children make good progress.
- The tracking of pupils' progress is effective. For example, the school identified the reasons for pupils' broadly static levels of attainment in mathematics and this resulted in a programme of support and challenge for class teachers. The impact of this is seen in the considerable improvements made in 2012.
- The school has robust arrangements for performance management, including the regular monitoring of teaching. Staff find the feedback helpful in developing their professional skills. These processes have helped to improve the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. Support staff have also benefited from high-quality professional development and are now providing improved support for pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The curriculum is rich and provides a wide range of experiences for pupils to extend their learning. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strong. For example, pupils can describe why Guru Nanak is special, state the date of his birthday and talk confidently about religious celebrations, such as Eid and Diwali. They are fully aware of the Punjabi language being the language of the month and all sang with enjoyment, 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes' in Punjabi, during a whole-school assembly.
- The local authority provides effective support and has worked well with the senior leadership team, middle leaders and the governing body. They confirm the school's own evaluations of pupils' achievement and the quality of leadership.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their safety meet all current requirements and the school works well with parents and carers, keeping them informed through regular newsletters, text messages and the lively website.

■ The governance of the school:

Governors are much more challenging than they were at the previous inspection. They made a strategic decision to appoint the current leadership team and they hold the headteacher to account well through performance management. They are also supporting the professional development of middle leaders and making better links with the wider community. Governors have a clear understanding of the promotion of teachers and of progression in their salaries. They understand the school budget, monitoring the staffing budget carefully. They have a clear understanding about how the pupil premium is spent to support the particular needs of eligible pupils. Governors make highly effective use of their current expertise both to monitor and support the work of the school. An impending re-constitution has provided them with the opportunity to audit current governor skills, so as to ensure the new governing body can extend its skill base and build on existing strengths. They visit the school regularly to gain a first-hand understanding of how well the school is working. This helps to ensure that all staff maintain a tight focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively, ensuring that procedures for safeguarding pupils are well managed and regularly reviewed.

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	102808
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	400573

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Freeman
Headteacher	Rose Greaves
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 November 2009
Telephone number	020 8478 2977
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