

Thomas Fairchild Community School

Forston Street, London, N1 7HX

Inspection dates 7–8 March 2013

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 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in reading.
- Teaching is typically good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils are motivated and engaged in their learning.
- There is exemplary teaching in Years 2 and 4.
- In the Reception, most children make excellent progress in starting to learn to write.
- There is an inclusive atmosphere and pupils from different cultures get along well together.
- Pupils enjoy school, especially their new buildings and school dinners, and say they feel safe. Their attendance is now similar to the national average.
- Leaders at all levels, including members of the governing body, have secured improvements in pupils' progress and the quality of teaching through rigorous monitoring.
- Governors effectively challenge leaders and hold them to account in terms of pupils' progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently and, on occasion, teachers do not check pupils' understanding regularly enough.
- Feedback from teachers in pupils' books does not always provide pupils with specific information to extend their skills.
- Occasionally, pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs, and boys, make slower progress in aspects of writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 22 lessons, of which all were joint observations with the senior leadership team. The team also spent time in the Early Years Foundation Stage observing the quality of teaching and support that is given to children in Nursery and Reception.
- The team observed behaviour around the school and in some lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher to discuss the progress that pupils make throughout the school.
- Meetings were held with other senior leaders and staff, with the local authority’s leadership and management adviser, and with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered parents’ and carers’ views of the school through informal discussions at the start of the inspection. At the end of the first day, there were no responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire (Parent View). On the second day, leaders made laptops and iPads available for parents and carers to input their responses. As a result, there were 17 responses and these were taken into account by inspectors. There were also discussions with pupils and staff. The team had lunch with the pupils, listened to them read and interviewed pupils during lunchtime.
- The team examined a number of documents, including the school’s own data on pupils’ current progress, and planning and monitoring documentation. They looked at attendance figures and pupils’ work.
- On the first day of the inspection, Year 4 pupils were visiting the Science Museum.

Inspection team

Janice Williams, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Michael Buist	Additional inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional inspector

Full reports

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- More than half of the pupils are known to be eligible for additional support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children, those eligible for free school meals and the children of service families. This figure is above the national average. The number of pupils looked after by the local authority is very small, and there are no pupils from service families.
- Approximately 99% of the pupils are from ethnic backgrounds other than White British. The major groups are of African, Bangladeshi, Turkish, Kurdish, Turkish Cypriot, Caribbean and Indian heritage.
- Around 60% of the pupils speak English as an additional language and this proportion is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action is well above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The previous school building was destroyed by fire and the school was housed on separate sites in other schools until the school was rebuilt. Since September 2012, the school has been located in its own new building.
- The previous headteacher left in early September 2012 and an associate headteacher has been in post since.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching overall by:
 - reducing teacher-led activities and providing more opportunities for pupils to work on their own
 - ensuring that pupils' understanding is always checked regularly in lessons, so that where necessary, lesson plans can be amended to accelerate learning
 - ensuring that teachers' comments in books consistently provide advice for pupils on how to improve basic skills.
- Accelerate boys' progress in writing by creating more engaging topics to stimulate writing activities.
- Accelerate progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs by ensuring that work is always matched to individual needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Despite the disruption caused by the school being temporarily housed on split sites followed by the move into a new building, most pupils across different year groups make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children enter Nursery with skills that are well below expectations for their age in all areas of learning, particularly in communication and language skills and in calculations. They make good progress in Nursery and in Reception because of the good-quality teaching, especially in the linking of letters and sounds. Consequently, they make particularly strong progress in writing simple sentences to express their opinions.
- Attainment is below average on entry to Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, so that by the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is broadly average. At times, when activities are too teacher directed and pupils do not have the opportunity to work on their own, progress, although still good, is more limited.
- Although attainment in the Year 1 linking of letters and sounds check was below average, progress in reading in Year 2 is particularly strong because of the rigorous focus there on the linking of letters and sounds.
- This strong rate of progress in reading continues in Key Stage 2. Overall, pupils make consistently good or better progress in reading because of the many support group sessions, including those for pupils who speak English as an additional language; these pupils learn to read with confidence, accurately blending sounds and understanding what they have read.
- Progress in writing and mathematics is good overall, although on occasion the rate of progress of some pupils slows. Boys' progress in writing, for example, sometimes slows in comparison with girls' because topics are not always sufficiently engaging. Although the rate of progress of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is good overall, it too sometimes slows in writing and in mathematics when work is not fully matched to individual needs
- All other groups make consistently good progress, including pupils from different ethnic heritages and those eligible for pupil premium funding.
- All groups of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium reach similar levels of attainment to other pupils in the school in both English and mathematics as measured by their average points scores at the end of Key Stage 2.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall. In most lessons, pupils are interested, engaged and eager to learn.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is generally good because there is a good balance between adult-led and children's own chosen activities. As a result, children develop independent learning skills and make good or better progress in all learning areas. Teaching assistants are all well trained and support children well. They extend children's learning through high-quality discussions and questioning.
- Teaching is particularly strong in Years 2 and 4 because in these year groups in particular the pace of learning is brisk, pupils are fully engaged in challenging activities and they consequently make rapid progress.
- In a Year 2 lesson, all pupils were engaged in an independent learning exercise on measuring. They had very positive attitudes and were enthusiastic. The teacher extended their learning by allowing free movement and pupils selected what they would like to measure, and were then able to confidently explain how to accurately measure a distance. The support assistant was deployed effectively to work with the group that required additional support.
- In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher's high level of questioning motivated the pupils and gave them

time to extend their skills in interpreting data. The teacher regularly revisited the learning outcomes to secure pupils' understanding and extend their learning.

- In a few lessons in other year groups, teachers sometimes talk too long and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to respond to questioning to test their own understanding or to work on their own.
- Planning is good overall. Tasks set are mostly appropriate for the different age groups so that pupils are typically well motivated. However, on occasion, writing topics for boys are not always sufficiently stimulating.
- Books are marked regularly, with consistent advice given on how to improve both literacy and numeracy skills. In a minority of instances, there is a lack of consistency in the advice given.
- Teaching assistants provide good guidance and support to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and, consequently, in most lessons, they make similar progress to their peers. On occasion, work is not fully matched to individual needs, and the rate of progress slows.
- In the majority of teaching, pupils' understanding is checked regularly so that lesson activities can, if necessary, be modified to accelerate progress. Occasionally, such checks are not frequent enough and opportunities are missed to encourage faster progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour and safety are good and pupils attend school regularly. Their behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. In lessons where teaching is outstanding, exemplary behaviour is evident.
- In most lessons, pupils are well behaved; the majority are engaged and want to learn. There is a calm atmosphere around the school and most pupils conduct themselves in a mature manner. They enjoy the school dinners and are polite and courteous.
- Most pupils interviewed are very positive about school. They all like their new buildings and enjoy coming to school. They express confidence in feeling safe. A few pupils say some bullying exists but teachers and leaders respond quickly and deal with it. Pupils also confidently describe some of the sanctions pupils have received. The majority of the pupils say bullying of any type does not happen and, if it did, they know they can speak to staff.
- They also know that they can use the 'Bright Ideas' boxes to voice their opinions and discuss issues that are affecting them. During class assembly, teachers select a topic from the boxes and discuss it with pupils.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe at school and while travelling on the road, with these topics given a strong emphasis in assemblies. Pupils know how to safely use the internet because there has been e-safety assembly and class discussions during internet safety week. An information and communication technology (ICT) lesson during that week was linked to e-safety.
- Pupils are very polite and work well with each other during lessons. The school effectively encourages pupils to communicate with each other through the use of 'talk partners'.
- Leaders have a 'No exclusion' policy and they manage behaviour well by working closely with the local authority and different agencies.
- A very large majority of the parents and carers interviewed, and those who responded to Parent View, say that their child is well looked after, feels safe at the school and that bullying is dealt with effectively. An overwhelming majority say they would recommend the school to another parent or carer.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good because leaders, including governors, have high expectations and rigorously monitor the quality of teaching. Effective support programmes are in place to enable teachers to improve their own performance.
- Leaders and managers have secured improvement in both the quality of teaching and pupils'

achievement since the last inspection. Leadership and management are not outstanding because some aspects of support for special educational needs are not as effective in helping pupils to make as much progress in writing and mathematics as they do in reading. Nevertheless, overall progress is good.

- The associate headteacher has ensured that there is cohesive leadership where all leaders clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in securing further improvements in the quality of teaching and in achievement.
- There is exemplary leadership on the senior leadership team. The associate headteacher is aptly supported by her two deputy headteachers and she has ensured that leadership and management focuses on improving pupils' progress. There are regular pupils' progress meetings that identify pupils who are underachieving. Strategies are put in place to address individual needs and their impact is monitored carefully.
- Leaders have improved their communication with parents and carers, and the school community. Parents and carers are encouraged to participate in the life of the school. There are computers available for parents and carers to use and weekly 'Parent Coffee' mornings to discuss various issues such as the school's structure, bullying and home learning.
- Teachers' performance management has very focused objectives which are linked to improving teaching and promoting learning; leaders have also ensured that teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' assessment data and use of this data is evident in teachers' planning.
- Although some middle leaders are fairly new in post, they have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and have demonstrated their competence by putting strategies in place to improve pupils' progress. They examine pupils' books and provide helpful feedback on how to improve the quality of teaching, especially in their subject areas. For some such initiatives, it is too soon to see the full impact on pupils' learning, but there are already positive signs.
- The special needs coordinator has well-established systems and procedures to check the progress of individual pupils.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has ensured there is a strong focus on developing children's personal, social and emotional development and literacy skills. As a result, children's speaking and listening skills have improved and they make excellent progress in writing.
- The local authority has worked effectively with leaders to externally moderate pupils' progress information and to validate the school's judgements on teaching and learning.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to fund additional support from teachers and teaching assistants, one-one tuition, small-group support and booster classes.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to read widely and, as a language resource school, there is a strong focus on developing pupils' speech and language skills so that they can confidently converse with their peers and increase their learning opportunities in lessons. It also promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are introduced to different cultures and religion through assemblies and focus weeks. Consequently, pupils of different cultures get along well together and pupils demonstrate a high level of respect for their peers and for adults.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive of the school and continuously challenge leaders to further improve pupils' achievement. They have given strong support to the school throughout the period of upheaval concerning the school buildings. They are very knowledgeable about the school and have had training from the local authority in understanding data that compares the school's progress and pupils' attainment to the national average. As a result, they know that most pupils make good progress. They effectively monitor the spending of the pupil premium funding and ensure that all vulnerable pupils are supported through extra tuition and small-group support. Governors are aware that teachers' pay is linked to pupils' progress; the teaching and learning committee meets regularly to discuss assessment information and teaching in the school, including underperformance. Link governors visit the school and document their observations with questions for further clarification from leaders. They make sure that safeguarding requirements are fully met and effective.

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	100243
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	404719

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Barton
Headteacher	Jenny Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 June 2011
Telephone number	020 7253 9469
Fax number	020 7251 7199
Email address	jlewis@thomasfairchild.hackney.sch.uk

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