

Elizabeth Selby Infants School

Old Bethnal Green Road, London, E2 6PP

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Children make consistently good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because many aspects of its work are outstanding.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils reach broadly average standards from low starting points and achieve well.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is a particular strength of the school. Consequently, pupils read well.
- Teachers make learning exciting for pupils and give them plenty of practical things to do.
- The school caters well for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so that they make good progress.
- Pupils are keen to learn, behave well and say they feel safe at the school. Parents are very positive about their children's experiences.
- The school engages extremely well with parents and involves them fully in their children's learning.
- Leaders, managers and governors are united in wanting the very best for pupils, and work together closely. As a result, the school is improving rapidly, teaching is strengthening and achievement is increasing.
- The headteacher's relentless drive for excellence is shared and embraced by all staff who work together as a strong team.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is not quite as strong as in reading and mathematics because pupils do not write enough at length in different subjects.
- Pupils' vocabulary is often not extensive enough to allow pupils to write really well.
- More-able pupils are not challenged enough to reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to work by themselves.
- Teachers often accept one word answers from pupils instead of demanding a fuller response.
- Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across different classes.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 30 lessons or parts of lessons, some of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils read, attended two assemblies and looked closely at examples of pupils' work with senior leaders.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, the school's checks on how well it is doing, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, phase leaders, the Nursery and Reception lead teachers, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative from the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- There were too few responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for them to count, but inspectors spoke to parents in the playground before school.
- The inspectors considered 29 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alastair McMeckan	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized infant school.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion that speaks English as an additional language is high. The largest group is Bangladeshi.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed services) is high.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Early years provision consists of two Nursery classes and three Reception classes. The children make use of shared areas both inside and outside.
- A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2012.
- Elizabeth Selby (after whom the school is named) was a former headteacher of the school who died tragically, but left a large endowment to the school which continues to benefit pupils in subsidising trips and enrichment activities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase achievement in writing across the school by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length in different subjects
 - extending pupils' vocabulary so that pupils use more adventurous language.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - challenging more-able pupils so that more of them reach the higher levels of attainment
 - expecting pupils to give full responses to questions rather than one word answers
 - allowing more time for pupils to work and think things out by themselves
 - making sure all staff adopt a consistent approach to marking pupils' work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. In the past year progress accelerated, particularly in Year 2, as the school has adopted new approaches to teaching basic skills and is setting pupils by ability for writing and mathematics. This means there is not such a wide range of ability in each group and teachers can focus on getting the most out of pupils' learning.
- While less-able and middle-ability pupils have always done well, teachers have not always challenged the more-able pupils sufficiently, with the result that fewer are gaining the higher levels of attainment. Sometimes the work set is too easy for the more-able pupils, or they have to sit through explanations they already understand.
- Children join the Nursery with skills and abilities that are often very low for their age, especially in language and communication. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because there is a rich and stimulating learning environment and they are immersed in a wide range of well-chosen, enjoyable tasks that fire their imaginations.
- Last year, in Year 1, pupils performed well below the national average in the phonics screening check, mainly because they were unfamiliar with nonsense words and were trying to turn them into real ones. The school has put a lot of work into improving the teaching of phonics so that standards are rising rapidly and many more pupils are on course to pass the check this year.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average, but not quite so strong in writing. This is because pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length in different subjects. While teachers encourage pupils to learn new specialist vocabulary such as 'pupa' and 'chrysalis' (when finding out about the life cycle of the butterfly), pupils do not yet have a wide enough vocabulary to produce imaginative and sparkling writing of their own.
- Handwriting is sometimes untidy and work is not presented neatly. Pupils are not always encouraged to take a real pride in their work.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and have plenty of opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge in solving problems.
- Since the previous inspection (when it was a weakness) achievement in reading has improved rapidly. This has come about as a result of the push on improving phonics so that pupils are confident in using their skills to tackle new words. They enjoy reading and especially look forward to the weekly visits from their reading partners, volunteers from nearby city institutions. Pupils read widely and talk enthusiastically about the books they enjoy.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are identified early and support is tailored to suit them. The proportion of pupils who need additional help has been reducing as teaching quality has risen.
- In 2012, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals performed better than such pupils nationally and the gap in attainment in English and mathematics with other pupils in the school was about half a term, much narrower than the national gap of two terms. The school's tracking data show that the gap is closing further this year.
- Those pupils eligible for the pupil premium achieve well. The additional funding is spent wisely on supporting their learning, on specialist support such as speech therapy and art therapy, and on supporting their personal development through subsidising enrichment activities such as trips and visits. These pupils also benefit from learning outdoors in Forest School programmes.
- Pupils new to learning English, including Bangladeshi pupils, are well supported and achieve well. Teachers make sure they are fully included in all activities and given the extra help they need to access learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- The proportion of good and better teaching is increasing. Outstanding teaching is found mainly in the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers are very clear what they want pupils to learn and

spell out exactly what they need to do. They use resources well, including technology, to interest and engage pupils.

- Teaching is generally pitched at the right level for pupils, although sometimes more-able pupils are not challenged enough. Teachers build on pupils' previous learning and take account of their interests and aspirations. This means that pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and are keen to take part in lessons.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers skilfully link meaningful learning activities to the class topic. For example, Reception pupils enjoyed acting out the life-cycle of the frog and children in the Nursery made bird nests they could count eggs into.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning because teachers brief them well beforehand and they work closely together to support individuals and groups of pupils. This enables pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers often ask pupils interesting questions to assess what they understand and to extend their learning. However, sometimes they are too easily satisfied with one word answers, when a whole sentence would be better, and the teachers end up doing a lot more of the talking than the pupils.
- Phonics is taught especially well. Pupils are confident with the sounds that letters make and can apply their skills in a range of different ways. Teachers make learning enjoyable by planning exciting activities and games and conducting sessions at a brisk pace. Reception children enjoyed a matching game where they had to pair up with somebody who had a picture of their word when they were learning the sound [mp] as in 'lamp' and 'chimp'.
- The use of specialist teachers in music, drama and sport gives pupils high quality experiences and enables them to make good progress in acquiring skills in these subjects.
- Occasionally, pupils do not have enough time to work by themselves if the teacher talks for too long, or if they spend too long moving from one activity to another.
- Work in books shows that teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning and that they make good progress over time. Sometimes the work is not as neatly presented as it could be and handwriting is untidy. Marking is inconsistent across the school. Pupils do not always have the time to respond to teachers' comments and next steps in their books and there is no agreed code for indicating whether verbal feedback has been given.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school and behave well. They are confident and friendly, readily chatting about their learning to visitors. They cooperate together and are enthusiastic. Excellent relationships mean that classes have a positive atmosphere where pupils can thrive.
- Behaviour is good around the school and in the playground. Lunchtime is a relaxed and enjoyable social occasion for pupils. They say that behaviour is good and that there is no bullying. Pupils know about different types of bullying such as name calling. They are confident that adults will help them if they have any worries.
- Pupils know how to keep safe, for example when using tools or crossing roads, and say that they feel safe in school. This view is supported by parents. The school takes pupils on the tube, so they are confident about travelling in different ways.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. The school council helps to organise fundraising activities and pupils helpfully visit the elderly. At harvest time they make donations to a local food bank.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. They are good role models for pupils. The school can point to individuals whose behaviour has improved considerably as a result of the support they have received, such as art therapy and music therapy.
- The school has worked hard to share with parents the importance of their children not missing school and attendance has risen so that it is now similar to the national average for primary schools, which is good for an infant school where pupils are more susceptible to catching illnesses. A recent workshop for parents on attendance was well attended; 60 parents turned up.

- Pupils' behaviour is not outstanding because in some classes their attention wanders or the pupils become passive and do not engage fully with learning. This is often when the pace of learning slows because pupils do not have enough opportunities to work by themselves, or because they are insufficiently challenged. In assembly a few pupils can be restless.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong teamwork is an excellent feature of the school's leadership and management. The headteacher's open and approachable style gives staff confidence, and her drive and determination for all pupils to succeed, whatever their starting points or circumstances, inspires staff to rise to any challenge. This is why Elizabeth Selby Infants is a school that makes a real difference to pupils' life chances and brings out the best in each individual.
- Leaders of subjects and other aspects of the school's work have a good grasp of their responsibilities and keep a careful check on how things are going. They are willing to adopt new approaches and are always looking for better ways of doing things. This brings a freshness and vitality to the school.
- Leaders have a good understanding of what the school does well and how it could improve, and this is set out in clear plans for improvement. The headteacher and governors regularly rate their progress against the school's key priorities so that they build up a picture of their effectiveness in bringing about rapid gains.
- Frequent meetings about how well pupils are doing hold teachers to account for their progress and identifies promptly any pupils at risk of falling behind so that further support can be arranged for them.
- The new deputy headteacher is already having a positive influence on the school's work and forms a strong senior leadership team with the headteacher.
- Leaders manage the performance of teachers robustly, setting challenging but achievable targets and making clear their high expectations.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils' different cultures and traditions are celebrated and there are strong links with schools in Uganda and rural Essex. The Forest School activities have widened pupils' horizons and helped pupils to appreciate the wonder of the natural world. A diverse programme of visits and visitors gives pupils many memorable experiences, including an annual sleepover and regular visits to the nearby Museum of Childhood. However, pupils are not always encouraged to write at length in different subjects.
- The local authority provides effective light touch support to the school. The school has forged excellent relationships with parents, and reaches out to a wide range of other agencies and schools. It makes sure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed, free from discrimination.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are kept very well informed about the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils by the headteacher. Members of the 'raising standards' committee find out in depth about these aspects of the school's work and ask searching questions. Governors are very keen for the school to do well and, under the guidance of their new Chair, are clearly focused on helping leaders to improve the quality of education. New governors are inducted well and encouraged to participate fully in meetings from the start. The governing body sets challenging targets for the headteacher and follows carefully how other members of staff are getting on. It knows what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance and is considering ways of rewarding good teaching. Governors keep a close eye on how the school uses its funding, such as the pupil premium, and the impact this is having. They make sure that all safeguarding arrangements are secure.

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	100908
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	412594

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	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Oliver Hopwood
Headteacher	Tej Stride
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2010
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