

George Mitchell School

Farmer Road, London,

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils in both the primary and secondary phases do not make sufficiently good progress in English and mathematics.
- In the secondary phase, students do not make good progress in science, drama, history, music and physical education.
- Some teachers do not use assessment information to plan work that matches pupils' different abilities.
- Although pupils' books are marked regularly, some teachers' comments do not provide pupils with sufficient guidance to help them improve.
- In some books in the primary phase, teachers do not check additional questions given to challenge pupils; as a result, errors are not corrected.
- Pupils do not always respond to teachers' comments. Consequently, they do not improve their work.
- There are insufficient opportunities for joint planning and using information from pupils' assessments to identify and improve similar weaknesses across both phases.
- Leaders' evaluation of teaching is not checked thoroughly with the work that is in pupils' books. Consequently, they are over generous in their judgements of teaching, especially in the primary phase.
- Leaders, including governors, have not rigorously monitored pupils' progress across both phases to enable all pupils to make accelerated progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher is well supported by her leadership team. They have restored staff morale; most pupils are no longer underachieving, and some are achieving well.
- In the short time the leadership team have been working together, pupils' achievement of the end of each key stage has improved year on year, with the most recent results showing pupils making better progress.
- Pupils are now attending school more regularly and they enjoy the many clubs, trips and additional support that they receive.
- Pupils' behaviour out of lessons is generally good. In the secondary phase, pupils are polite and eager to learn.
- Pupils are responsible. They enjoy looking after new pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The new governing body is evaluative and are asking more challenging questions so that leaders are more focused on accelerating pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 35 lessons, of which approximately half of the lessons seen were joint observations with the acting headteacher and other leaders.
- The team observed pupils' behaviour around the school, especially at playtimes. There were additional meetings with pupils from the primary phase to discuss their perceptions of behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher and the assistant headteacher with responsibility for assessment to discuss the progress that groups of pupils make throughout the school. They analysed the school's information on attainment and progress data.
- Meetings were held with other senior leaders and staff, with the local authority's senior improvement consultant and with three governors.
- Inspectors considered parents' and carers' views of the school through informal discussions at the start of the inspection and the 52 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). There were also discussions with pupils and staff. The team listened to pupils read and interviewed pupils.
- Questionnaire responses from 57 members of staff were analysed.
- The team examined a number of documents, including minutes of governors' meetings, information on pupils with special educational needs and leaders' monitoring of teaching. They examined the school's self-evaluation and pupils' work.

Inspection team

Janice Williams, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Raminder Arora	Additional Inspector
James Coyle	Additional Inspector
Aileen Thomas	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized all-through school.
- The percentage of girls on roll is similar to the national average.
- Over half of 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 well above the national average. There are a few pupils looked after by the local authority and no pupils from service families at the school.
- Most of the pupils are from Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British and mixed backgrounds.
- Around three quarters of the pupils speak English as an additional language and this proportion is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action is similar to the national average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average.
- In 2012, the primary phase did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. However, the secondary phase met the government's current floor standards.
- The school operates across five sites. There is a new building on the primary site which has Years 3, 5 and 6 classes.
- Since the last inspection, there have been many staff changes; the leadership team was restructured and the governing body was reconstituted. The former headteacher retired in August 2012 and the deputy headteacher became acting headteacher. The primary phase now has a principal and an assistant headteacher with responsibility for assessment in the primary phase who was appointed in September 2013.
- A new headteacher will take up post in January 2014.
- There are currently no students who attend off-site alternative provision either on a full- or part-time basis.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by:
 - using assessment information to plan work that appropriately matches the different abilities of all pupils
 - providing pupils with more detailed feedback and more time to reflect, assess and improve the quality of their work
 - ensuring that marking clearly informs pupils of how they can improve their work
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to read and respond to teachers' feedback
 - checking pupils' responses to additional questions given during feedback so that their learning is continuous.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in English in both the primary and secondary phase by providing pupils with:
 - more opportunities to use a variety of sentence structure and a range of punctuation to make their written pieces more interesting
 - more opportunities to improve the structure and organisation of their written pieces
 - more opportunities for pupils to explore the audience that they are writing for and to use a range of sophisticated and appropriate words to express their ideas.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics in both the primary and secondary phase by:

- providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge in solving more challenging concepts.
- Improve pupils' behaviour in the primary school by ensuring that lessons are more engaging and challenging for pupils of all abilities.
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels by:
 - ensuring that there is more collaborative work between teachers across the primary and secondary phases so that similar weaknesses in pupils' work can be identified and quickly addressed
 - rigorously monitoring and evaluating teaching by checking the quality of work in pupils' books with assessment information that is provided by departments
 - thoroughly monitoring pupils' progress across both phases so that pupils in all year groups make accelerated progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires further improvement because pupils in both the primary and secondary phases do not make good progress in English and mathematics. However, their progress in these subjects have improved year on year since the new leadership team has been monitoring their progress more closely.
- Children enter Nursery with skills that are well below the levels expected for their age, especially in communication and language skills and personal, social and emotional development. They make only adequate progress because some adults do not spend sufficient time supporting children with focused activities and sometimes there are not enough opportunities to extend children's responses.
- Approximately half of the children do not continue into Reception, and as a result, their attainment is still below expectations for their age on leaving. Children continue to make only steady progress because some adults do not use probing questions to extend their learning potential.
- Most of the pupils continue into Year 1 with low attainment and at the end of Year 2 their attainment is often below the national average levels in writing. Although their attainment in reading and mathematics is also below average, it has improved over the last two years. Their attainment in the Year 1 linking of letters and sounds check was below the national average in 2012 but has significantly increased in the most recent results.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is often below the national levels in English and mathematics but has improved year on year. By the end of Year 6, pupils make adequate progress given their very low starting points.
- Most of the primary pupils continue into the secondary phase and are joined by others from surrounding schools. Students enter Year 7 with attainment that is well below the national average. At the end of Year 11, their attainment in English and mathematics GCSE exams is often below the national average.
- In the most recent tests, pupils' progress across the primary and secondary phase continued to show improvements. In last summer's GCSE examinations, students made good progress in English and excellent progress in mathematics. Most students sit their examinations at the end of Year 11. However, some sit the mathematics paper earlier in Year 11 and this has resulted in their excellent progress in mathematics where more pupils are achieving better than the progress that is expected of them because they have the opportunity to re-sit the exam and improve their grades.
- Across both phases, current pupils, including those in receipt of the Year 7 catch-up premium, are making steady progress in English and mathematics. In the secondary phase, students' progress in science, drama, history, music and physical education is a bit slow, but is improving.
- In both phases, most pupils read books at the correct levels with confidence and expression but a few less able pupils still struggle with the blending and decoding of sounds (phonics).
- Especially in English, pupils do not make good progress because they often do not use a wide range of sentence structures and punctuation marks to make their work more interesting. Some pupils do not get enough opportunities to improve the structure and organisation of their written pieces. In some lessons, they do not often identify the audience to whom they are writing and they do not use more complex and advanced words to express their ideas.
- Pupils make only adequate progress in mathematics because they are not given enough activities and tasks to enable them to apply their knowledge and skills in solving more challenging concepts.
- In all key stages, most pupils supported by the pupil premium, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who speak English as an additional language make similar or slightly better progress than their peers in English and mathematics, because they receive adequate support from additional adults.

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers in English but they make slow progress in mathematics.
- More-able pupils are now making better progress than their peers in English and mathematics because leaders have rigorously monitored their progress.
- In 2012, the attainment of Year 6 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was similar to their peers in English and a year and half ahead of their peers in mathematics. The attainment of the Year 11 free school meals pupils was approximately a term behind that of their peers in English and a year behind their peers' in mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not good because assessment information is not used appropriately to match the tasks and activities to the different abilities of the pupils.
- Although teaching is stronger in the secondary phase, similar weaknesses are evident across both phases. Teachers do not often plan collaboratively and information from pupils' assessments is not used effectively to identify and improve common weaknesses across both phases.
- In the weaker lessons, some teachers talked for too long and pupils were disengaged from some of the tasks. Across both phases, pupils did similar work, and in some lessons the more able pupils were prevented from making better progress because they continued to do less challenging work, although they clearly understood the easy tasks.
- There was an example of outstanding teaching in a Year 9 art lesson. The teacher communicated well to pupils and had very high expectations. There was continuous reference to literacy concepts and pupils made excellent progress in confidently using industry-standard software. They confidently made links to other subjects from their work.
- In a good Year 2 lesson, pupils were given many opportunities to work independently. Pupils made good progress because the teacher asked challenging questions that made them reflect on the use and function of different mathematical operations.
- Pupils' books are marked regularly, but in both phases pupils are not given enough time to read and respond to teachers' comments. In some lessons, they are not given enough time to reflect and assess how to improve their work.
- In the primary phase, feedback from teachers is more detailed in telling pupils what they have done well. However, the guidance given to them is vague and often does not provide sufficient advice for them to improve their work.
- In some classes, teachers do not check whether pupils have responded to additional questions asked. As a result, their learning is a bit disjointed because wrong solutions and misconceptions are not corrected.
- In the secondary phase, books are marked with many ticks but pupils are given insufficient guidance to help them improve the quality of their work. Consequently, they make only adequate progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- In both phases, pupils behave well around the school. In the secondary phase, pupils' behaviour is good in lessons as well; however, pupils' attitudes to learning are not so positive in the primary phase. There is some low-level disruptive behaviour when the teaching is weak and activities are unexciting or do not match the different abilities of the pupils.
- In the secondary phase, pupils are polite and friendly. They pleasantly welcome visitors to the school and are attentive in lessons. Students are eager to learn and try their best, even in the very few lessons that were uninspiring.
- In Nursery and Reception, children learn to accept each other's differences as they work and play in harmony.

- On the primary site, the new building works have caused some of the pupils' play equipment to be removed, but most pupils play in a responsible manner. Both boys and girls play together well and respect is shown to both their peers and adults.
- Pupils take great pride in looking after new pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Throughout the phases, pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are aware of how to use the internet safely. In the primary phase, pupils say there are a few incidences of bullying and they say that adults deal with these situations effectively.
- In the playground, pupils generally respond well to staff's directions to freeze and join the queue. However, the noise level is high in a few classes.
- On the secondary site, students enjoy playing ball games and table tennis. They are allowed access to the buildings and they treat the school's property and resources with a great deal of care.
- Most of the parents who respond to Parent View and those who spoke to inspectors at the primary site say that their children are happy and well looked after. A few parents of primary pupils had concerns about pupils' safety at dismissal times at the end of the school day. Leaders are putting plans in place to address this concern.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The leadership team have been in place for the last two years. They are passionate about pupils achieving the best they can; however, their ambition to accelerate all pupils' progress has not been fully realised because they have been focusing on reducing underachievement, especially in the primary phase.
- The acting headteacher and her leadership team have ensured that pupils' achievement at the end of each key stage has improved. The most recent end-of-key-stage results are the best examination results the school has had.
- Leaders are aware of the strengths of the school and areas that need further development, but their evaluation of the school's performance is over generous.
- There is insufficient collaborative work between teachers across the primary and secondary phases, especially in English and mathematics, to identify weakness in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills that need improvement. Although there are similar weaknesses in pupils' work, the strategies introduced across both phases are a bit disjointed. However, most pupils in both phases make are making steady progress and most are making better progress than before.
- Leaders have taken appropriate actions, through the performance management system, to eradicate inadequate teaching, especially in the primary phase.
- Leaders have monitored teaching regularly and with the help of the local authority they have ensured that their judgements are accurate, but their monitoring and evaluation is not rigorously checked with the quality of work in pupils' books and assessment information that is provided by departments. As a result, the quality of work in pupils' books often does not match the different abilities of the pupils so they are sometimes not challenged to extend their knowledge and skills.
- Although there is detailed information on pupils' attainment and progress, especially at the end of each key stage, assessment information is not used rigorously by all to accelerate different groups of learners' progress.
- The local authority has worked well with the school; they have ratified teaching judgements, assisted in appointing new governors, and they were involved in the interview process for the new headteacher. .
- The school uses the pupil premium funding effectively to provide extra support from teachers and supporting adults for pupils learning English as an additional language, pupils with special educational needs, or those in need of emotional or behavioural support.
- The curriculum has a wide range of subjects with interesting topics that appeal to all pupils. As a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through pupils' work with charities and their involvement in steel pan lessons, and they have many trips to

different places of worship.

- In the primary phase, the sports funding is well used to implement many activities that develop pupils' physical, creative and social skills. As a result, they enjoy physical education lessons and are eager to participate in the varied activities.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The new governing body is very supportive of the school's work and governors are more accurate than leaders in their evaluation of how the school compares to other schools nationally. They know that the school is 'on a journey to becoming a good school'. They are aware that pupils have made better progress in the most recent Key Stage 2 and GCSE examinations. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and praise the acting headteacher for restoring staff morale and reducing underperformance in pupils' progress, especially in English and mathematics.
- Governors are familiar with the school's internal systems for monitoring the quality of teaching but they do not realise that teaching is weaker in the primary phase. At the time of the inspection, the governing body was still recruiting members.
- Governors have been on many training courses and have the skills and experience to effectively challenge leaders because the current team have all been governors in other schools. As a result of being in operation for a short time span and not having the full complement of governors, they have not been able to thoroughly check the accuracy of information that is given by leaders because they have been heavily involved in the recruitment of the new headteacher. They use performance management effectively to monitor the work of the acting headteacher and are aware of how good teaching is rewarded. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are 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	103096
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	425636

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	941
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Deeks
Acting Headteacher	Claire Kirwin
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 May 2011
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