

John Scurr Primary School

Cephas Street, Stepney, E1 4AX

Inspection dates 1–2 April 2014

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.

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have successfully focused on improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement. They have demonstrated that the school has the capacity to improve further.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Consequently, many children achieve a good level of development by the time they leave Reception.
- Standards have risen in Key Stages 1 and 2 over the last two years. They are now close to the national average in mathematics and well above the national average in writing.
- Pupils who receive extra help make at least good progress.
- Systems to manage staff performance are rigorous and all staff benefit from high-quality training. Newly qualified teachers and support staff are very well supported in their roles.
- Good systems are in place to ensure that pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and consistently across the school.
- The school is welcoming, caring and supportive of pupils from all backgrounds; this has helped to create a cohesive school community.
- Strong personal, spiritual, moral and cultural development is at the heart of the school's success and underpins pupils' good behaviour both in class and around the school. Pupils feel safe at school.
- The governing body robustly holds the school to account for its performance, the management of its finances and safeguarding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of written marking mean that pupils do not always know how to improve their work. Pupils do not always take care about the presentation of their work.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is not as high as in writing and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2, and too few learners achieve the higher levels.
- Middle leaders are not fully involved in checking the quality of teaching in their subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 23 lessons or parts of lessons, including ones that were focused on the teaching of reading and physical education (PE). Six of these were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to specific support classes.
- Inspectors talked to pupils both informally and formally, including a group of more-able learners, heard them read and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers, including the online Parent View questionnaire. They also talked to several parents and carers before school and considered the views of staff expressed in 10 questionnaires.
- Discussions were held with representatives from the local authority’s advisory service and the Chair of the Governing Body and other members. They held discussions with members of the senior and extended leadership teams, including the special educational needs coordinators, early years’ leader, English and mathematics coordinators and support staff.
- Inspectors examined pupils’ progress data and other school documentation, including the minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour logs, and performance management and safeguarding information.

Inspection team

Barbara Firth, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alastair McMeckan	Additional Inspector
Raminder Arora	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- John Scurr Primary School is a larger-than-average size primary school.
- Most pupils speak English as an additional language or come from a minority ethnic group. The majority of pupils are of Bangladeshi heritage.
- A much higher than usual proportion of pupils join and leave the school during the school year.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above national averages.
- The proportion of children who are eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding given to schools for children in specific groups including those in care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics.
- The school is currently a member of the Teach East London Alliance which includes Phoenix Special School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that more is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers' marking consistently indicates to pupils what they need to do to improve their work
 - pupils have sufficient time to respond to their teachers' comments in marking and practise the skills their teachers want them to improve
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality of presentation in the work that their pupils are required to produce across all subjects
 - middle leaders take a more active role in monitoring the quality of teaching in their specific areas of responsibility.
- Accelerate pupils' rates of progress in reading so that standards are at least in line with the national average by the end of Key Stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - in reading lessons, pupils understand what they are expected to do when working without an adult so that learning time is not lost
 - tasks for the most able readers are challenging enough to extend their learning
 - there are appropriate reading resources that interest and extend all readers, including the most able
 - every opportunity is taken by teachers for pupils to practise their reading skills across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment has improved since the last inspection and most pupils achieve well from their various starting points. They do particularly well in writing and mathematics but progress is not as rapid in reading, especially for the more able.
- Most children start in Nursery with skills and knowledge well below the levels expected for their age. Good teaching ensures that they achieve standards broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Reception.
- In 2013, pupils in Key Stage 1 made good progress. They reached standards that were in line with the national average in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing were well above the national average.
- Pupils in the upper part of the school started Key Stage 2 with attainment which was well below that expected for their age. When they left Year 6 in 2013, most pupils had made at least good progress and reached standards in writing and mathematics that were in line with those seen nationally.
- An improved approach to the teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds) resulted in more pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics reading check in 2013.
- Attainment in reading also improved at the end of Year 2. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard by the end of Year 6 was below the national average and well below at the higher levels. The most able pupils told inspectors that the reading materials available to them were not challenging enough. On occasions when reading on their own, pupils' learning slows because they do not understand clearly what they have to do.
- As a result of strengthened teaching and targeted support the proportion of the most able pupils achieving at the highest levels in writing and mathematics is increasing across the school. However, leaders have rightly recognised that achievement at the higher levels is not as strong in reading in Key Stage 2. As a result, they have plans in place to address this, including increasing the emphasis on reading across all subjects. Evidence gathered during the inspection from the school's data and books indicates that standards in reading in 2014 will be an improvement on 2013.
- The school actively promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination. Regular checks on pupils' progress mean that anyone who needs extra help is quickly identified and provided with effective and specific support. Consequently, most disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those who join or leave the school at different times make good progress.
- Pupil premium funding is used well for extra staffing, one-to-one tuition, group support and extra resources, all of which are helping to accelerate progress for eligible pupils. As a result their attainment is better than that of similar pupils nationally. In 2013, Year 6 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attained as well as their peers in school in reading, mathematics and English, grammar, punctuation and spelling. The only gap was in writing, in which they were five months behind their peers. Evidence shows that this gap is narrowing over time.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in a range of subjects including literacy and numeracy is good. In recent years, school leaders have successfully focused on improving the quality of teaching through more rigorous checks on classroom practice. Better use is made of information on pupils' attainment and progress by all staff.
- Teachers have good working relationships with their pupils which results in a good climate for learning in all lessons.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn support pupils' progress extremely well. For example, in a highly successful Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were set the challenge of solving a series of problems to discover how much money was made at a school fair. The teacher made sure the pupils knew what extra knowledge and skills they would need in order to complete the task. All of the pupils were very engaged and worked well with others in order to solve the problems. The teacher checked on their learning and progress throughout the lesson and adjusted the task as and when appropriate so that learning did not slow for any individuals.
- A good range of approaches is in place to support those pupils in need of extra help, enabling them to learn and achieve well. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress. They benefit from extra support from additional staff who are well trained and highly effective in their role.
- More-able pupils are given work that challenges and interests them and this supports their good progress, especially in mathematics and writing.
- The quality of teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. Staff make good use of indoor and outdoor resources and plan activities that are sufficiently challenging to develop children's language and communication skills and personal development well. Every opportunity is used to provide activities that develop early reading, writing and number skills. For example, children were engrossed in building the highest tower with 'big bricks'. They had to support each other and label and number the bricks in correct number order. This helped them to consolidate number sequence and work together as a team. The 'learning journals', which provide evidence of children's learning, are shared with parents and carers and are of good quality.
- Not all teachers apply the new marking policies well enough. Consequently, pupils do not always know how to improve their work and take the next steps in their learning. In the instances when there is good advice, pupils are not always expected to or given the time to respond.
- The presentation of pupils' work sometimes undermines pupils' efforts and does not always reflect the typically good quality content. In some cases, this hinders communication in written work and causes basic calculation errors in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Inspectors agree with the views of parents and carers, staff and pupils that behaviour is good in the school. Pupils are polite and courteous to one another and there is a strong community feeling. They welcome opportunities to take responsibility, for example being members of the school council. Pupils and parents and carers say that it is a good school and would recommend it to their friends.
- Pupil's attitudes to learning are good because the school fosters positive relations and good behaviour routines are well established. They settle down to work right from the start of the lesson and work well together in pairs and groups. Any off-task behaviour is managed effectively by the teachers and the support staff.
- The needs of a very small number of pupils who have significant behavioural problems are managed very effectively by the school. This is a result of the well-thought-out and sensitive care that pupils receive from a range of adults in the school and from external agencies.
- The school site is attractively presented and pupils appreciate the equipment available to them in the playground and the displays in the corridors and classrooms. They manage their own safety with the playground equipment well and take good care of it.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They understand how to manage risk and to stay safe, including when using the internet. Pupils' understanding of the different types of bullying is secure. They say that bullying rarely happens, but when it does the school deals with it swiftly.
- Pupils are happy at school and, consequently, most attend school regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and the governing body are driving school improvement effectively. Their relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching is systematically and quickly eliminating inconsistencies in pupils' achievement
- However, leadership and management are not yet outstanding because not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Middle leaders are not given enough opportunity to have a full impact on raising achievement and increasing the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- School improvement planning reflects the school's drive to raise pupils' achievement. The plan has the right priorities. It sharply focuses on increasing the proportion of pupils making accelerated progress and the achievement of groups of pupils.
- Systems for managing staff performance are linked robustly to monitoring of pupil progress. The considerable investment in high-quality training for staff is having a notable impact on their classroom performance including that of newly qualified teachers.
- The new primary school sports funding is used effectively to increase rates of participation, promote healthy lifestyles and foster better skills, such as those in cycling and tennis.
- The school has a detailed strategic plan for how the pupil premium funding is to be spent and evaluates its impact through termly progress meetings.
- The curriculum is well planned, making particularly good links and references to pupils' needs and interests and thereby ensuring that learning is relevant and fun. There are rich opportunities for additional learning through specialist sports, music and visits to museums and galleries.
- Many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are provided. The school arranges visits to places of worship and ensures that pupils understand and respect faiths which are different to their own.
- The school welcomes the support and advice it receives from the local authority. It has been supported very effectively to improve the quality of teaching, particularly the teaching of phonics.
- The school has well-established and effective links with higher education and local businesses to support pupils' achievement including in music and reading in the school. They also support initial teacher training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows the school well and provides a good level of challenge and support. It makes sure that all safeguarding requirements are met, and that the school is safe and secure. All governors are linked to particular aspects of the school's work and are increasingly visiting the school to focus on key areas of school improvement. The governing body is fully informed about how the school is performing and has an accurate view on the quality of teaching and how this is linked to any increases in teachers' pay. Governors know what support has been provided to improve teaching and address previous underperformance. They have a good grasp of the school budget and ensure that pupils supported by the pupil premium and other additional funding achieve well.

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	100906
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	431310

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	471
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Lyall
Headteacher	Bridget Fagan
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 March 2009
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