

School 21

Pitchford Street, London, E15 4RZ

Inspection dates 17–18 June 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| | This inspection: | Outstanding 1 |
| Achievement of pupils | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | Outstanding | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- School 21 is an exciting place to learn. Outstanding leadership has produced a highly effective school within a short time.
- Pupils across the school make exceptional progress because they acquire knowledge and understanding beyond that expected for their age.
- They develop excellent skills in reading, writing and mathematics and use them to learn well in every subject.
- A well-researched, innovative and creative way of organising subjects promotes outstanding learning. Pupils develop extraordinary skills in listening, speaking and questioning and become skilled at planning and redrafting their work so that they can continually improve.
- Excellent teaching across the school and in every subject allows all groups of pupils to achieve equally well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together very productively. They constantly challenge each other to find ways to teach even more effectively.
- Precise feedback from staff and from other pupils helps to improve the quality and content of pupils' written work.
- The school's leaders and governors are meticulous in making sure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed. They make no excuses for any achievement or teaching that falls short of their high expectations.
- Through careful and rigorous monitoring, leaders continually challenge each other, the staff and the pupils to do their very best.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, impeccable manners and show respect for everyone. They are safe in school, and know that keeping healthy and safe will help them to learn and achieve.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Well-organised assemblies and thoroughly planned coaching sessions help pupils to acquire the resilience, confidence and social skills needed for their future lives.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 19 lessons and small-group activities jointly with members of the leadership team. They observed three assemblies, a tutor session and visited an exhibition of pupils' project work.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils as they arrived at the school, at break and lunchtimes, and in lessons. They spoke to pupils in their lessons about their work, looked at books, listened to pupils read, and met a group of pupils from each year group.
- Meetings were held with members of the trust and the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 55 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also talked to parents and carers in the playground.
- The inspection team took account of the 17 questionnaires returned by members of staff.
- Inspectors checked information on pupils' progress and attainment, records used by leaders and governors to check the performance of the staff and minutes of governing body meetings. The school's policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection were checked and inspectors examined records relating to behaviour and attendance. Reports from external organisations and individuals evaluating the school's performance were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Anne Wellham, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kekshan Salaria

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This free school opened in September 2012 as part of the School 21 Trust.
- It is much smaller than the average all-through school. Currently there are 292 pupils in four year groups: Reception and Year 1 in the primary phase; and Year 7 and Year 8 in the secondary phase.
- In September 2013 the school moved into new buildings.
- Pupils have a very wide range of cultural heritages. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- There are no public examination results by which to measure the school's performance against the government's current floor standards (the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress).
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school receives funding for around one-fifth of Year 7 pupils to catch up on their reading skills.
- The school has a governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the presentation of pupils' work by:
 - providing clear feedback on how to make their work neat, legible and well-organised
 - developing pupils' handwriting skills to a high standard throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The majority of children start the Reception class with skills which are well below the levels typical for their age. Many have not had access to pre-school settings. Children settle very quickly, become familiar with routines and develop confidence because of the strong and immediate links that are set up with parents and carers.
- As a result of excellent teaching, children learn quickly and make rapid progress in all areas of their development. Reading is taught very well because the adults responsible receive intensive training. Pupils learn phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) daily in small groups and by the time they reach Year 1 they are above the expected levels for their age.
- In Year 1, pupils make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is as a result of consistently effective teaching and excellent systems to check on individual progress. Any pupils identified as struggling are immediately helped to catch up. The quality of work seen in lessons and in children's books shows outstanding progress.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 make rapid progress from their below-average starting points because of excellent teaching. Pupils build up their knowledge and skills consistently because teachers and other adults continually plan together to improve pupils' reading, writing and mathematics in all subjects.
- Carefully planned, sharply focused termly projects set across subjects provide high levels of challenge for all pupils whatever their ability. The most able pupils produce remarkable work because no ceiling is put on their learning. For example, pupils in Year 8 completed a GCSE examination in history as part of a recent project and regularly produce work that meets this standard.
- A strong focus on oracy, the ability to talk fluently and accurately and express ideas, develops pupils' confidence, self-esteem and communication skills. It also strengthens the quality of teaching. This makes a significant contribution to the high standards that all pupils achieve. Pupils in Reception and Year 1 talked to inspectors fluently and expressively about their learning. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 talk and discuss with a maturity and confidence that is remarkable for their age.
- Pupils rarely fall behind in their learning because teaching is exceptionally well planned to allow pupils to learn whatever their ability. Pupils' progress in all subjects is checked rigorously to make sure that they all have an equal chance to succeed. Any barriers to learning are tackled quickly. Any additional support in lessons or outside the classroom is designed carefully and checked frequently to see if it is making a difference.
- The school makes highly effective use of all additional funding to improve achievement. Well-targeted support for Year 7 pupils who join the school with low levels of skills in reading and mathematics allows them to make rapid progress to catch up with and outperform their peers.
- Pupils eligible for additional pupil premium funding, including the more able, make the same outstanding progress as other pupils in the school. Information collected by the school shows that both primary and secondary pupils receiving support make faster progress than their peers.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make the same rapid progress as all other pupils in the school. This is because they experience excellent teaching and highly effective support from very well-trained teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Pupils consistently experience good and outstanding teaching across the school so that they are able to apply their knowledge and skills of reading, writing, listening and talking to whatever subject they are studying.
- In Reception and Year 1 pupils have time to explore problems for themselves and are eager to

learn. The teaching of phonics is outstanding. For example, in a small-group session in Reception, pupils read words such as 'litter' and 'they're'; then they progressed rapidly to building sentences using these words. The teaching of writing is equally strong.

- In Years 7 and 8 pupils are excited in lessons because they are challenged to think and encouraged to talk about how they learn. Teachers work together to plan substantial projects that allow pupils to develop skills and apply knowledge across a range of different subjects. For example, Year 8 completed a project on World War One which culminated in a stunning exhibition built by teams of pupils in a series of rooms in the school. Pupils achieved remarkable standards of work and demonstrated knowledge and skills at levels beyond those expected for their age group.
- Excellent questioning and the consistent use of high-quality feedback by staff and pupils are key strengths of teaching across the school. Teachers ask probing questions to challenge pupils' thinking and encourage them to develop and explain their ideas during lessons, in assemblies and tutor sessions and during extra-curricular activities. In turn, pupils ask probing questions of each other and provide feedback on each other's work. Rules for feedback are understood by all staff and pupils and used consistently well.
- Teaching improves rapidly because teachers are enthusiastic to discuss the craft of teaching. They refine their skills and constantly challenge each other to find ways to teach even more effectively.
- Another strong feature of teaching is the contribution made by highly effective teaching assistants. As a result of excellent training they are able to intervene and support pupils by asking probing questions and giving precise feedback.
- No pupil is left behind because teachers do not allow them to be held back by gaps in their reading, writing or mathematical skills. Pupils who speak little English or those with special educational needs receive excellent support and rapidly catch up.
- Feedback is very effective in improving the content of pupils' work but is not used as well to improve presentation. As a result there is sometimes a mismatch between the quality of what pupils are writing and the ways in which they set out their ideas. Pupils' handwriting can be untidy and occasionally work is presented with crossings out and gaps between different sections.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They are proud of the school and have pride in themselves. They are polite and respectful; they thrive on exploring the differences between the many cultural groups in the school. The buildings, classrooms and outside areas are well cared for, free of litter and graffiti and provide a secure and welcoming place to learn.
- In lessons pupils behave very well because they are so engrossed in their learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Coaching and a focus on pupils' emotional, physical and mental well-being are key threads that run through assemblies, tutor sessions, lessons and extra-curricular activities. This fosters very strong relationships between staff and pupils and makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. In addition pupils talk maturely about the risks to their safety and explore the best ways to confront and deal with challenges they may face.
- Pupils are articulate, confident, polite and respectful of each other. The rapid development of Reception and Year 1 pupils was evident in discussions with an inspector. They described the playground as 'a place to relax and find friends'. They also gave the meaning of bullying as 'happening all the time and on purpose'.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have a mature understanding of all the different forms of bullying, including those based on racism, homophobia, and misuse of the internet and texting. Pupils reported that any incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Attendance is above average and there are no significant differences in the attendance of different groups of pupils. There have been no permanent exclusions. The number of occasions

when pupils are excluded from school for short periods is well below the national average in the secondary phase and there have been none in the primary phase.

- The vast majority of parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire strongly agreed that the school is effective and said that they would recommend it to others. Strong links with parents and carers reinforce the links between pupils' behaviour, well-being and learning. Attendance at parent's evenings is excellent with nearly all parents and carers attending.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide excellent leadership and form an exceptionally strong team. They strongly believe that education should be done differently so that all children, including those who battle against the odds, have a chance to succeed in the 21st century.
- Subjects are organised in a well-researched, innovative and creative way to make sure that there are effective, ambitious links between them. Middle leaders in both phases are skilled teachers and have consistently high expectations of what is possible for pupils to achieve. Pupils pick up on their enthusiasm and respect all subjects.
- Rigorous systems to check the performance of staff are based on a wide range of evidence about the quality of teaching and the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Senior and middle leaders use the systems very effectively to set challenging targets.
- Staff morale is exceptionally high. Teachers at the early stages of their career value the 'fantastic' professional development and opportunities to learn from each other. Those with more experience said that they have become much better teachers since joining the school. Teachers who completed the survey during the inspection were unanimously positive about all aspects of the school's work.
- Funding for primary school physical education is used creatively to increase pupils' participation in sports clubs, to improve their sports skills and to promote healthy lifestyles. Specialist physical education coaches work alongside teachers to improve their teaching. Some 30 clubs, including a range of sports clubs, are on offer across the school at lunchtime and after school, and are particularly well attended.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors and trustees share the passion and commitment of the school's leaders and are fully involved in planning the next stage of the school's journey. They help to sustain effective partnerships to support further improvement and review all initiatives to make sure that the current successes can be replicated in the future.
 - Governors check carefully that there is a strong link between the quality of teaching, the achievement of pupils and teachers' pay progression. The systems used currently to reward excellent teachers are robust and could be used to tackle underperformance if required.
 - Governors attend frequent, relevant training. They have a very good understanding of pupil progress data and challenge leaders' analysis to make sure that there are no gaps in the achievement of different groups of pupils.
 - Regular visits to the school increase governors' awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. They keep a careful check on the school's finances and have an excellent understanding of how any additional funding is being used. For example, they have challenged leaders to provide evidence of the impact of the pupil premium funding on pupils' achievement.
 - Governors fulfil their statutory duties for safeguarding and check that current requirements are met and regularly reviewed.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 138196 |
| Local authority | Newham |
| Inspection number | 425465 |

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

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| Type of school | All-through |
| School category | Academy free school |
| Age range of pupils | 4–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 292 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | John King |
| Headteacher | Peter Hyman |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 020 8262 2121 |
| Email address | info@school21.org.uk |

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