

The Orion Primary School

Grahame Park Way, London, NW7 2AL

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- 'The Principal is the driving force behind a truly inspirational school', commented a member of staff, reflecting the views of many.
- The Orion Primary School serves its pupils extremely well. It has maintained and built upon the excellence reported at the previous inspection.
- The Principal's dynamic and highly energetic leadership has inspired leaders, managers and all staff to make each day special for the school's many pupils.
- Teaching is outstanding, enabling pupils to make rapid progress from their different starting points so that they leave Year 6 with standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are well above average.
- High-quality leadership of teaching and learning means that teachers and support staff improve quickly. Leaders are especially successful at developing new staff and those starting out in their careers.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding as they have a real thirst for knowledge and are extremely enthusiastic about learning.
- All parents and carers agree with the pupils' view that pupils are kept safe in school and have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- A wide range of subjects is tailored to pupils' interests and motivates them to excel. Pupils have numerous opportunities to take part in visits and clubs that enrich their experiences.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very well, enabling them to gain an excellent understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Governors have a highly developed understanding of how well the school is doing and keep themselves extremely well informed about its progress. This enables them to ask probing questions and challenge senior leaders about its performance.
- Good provision in the early years enables children to make an effective start in gaining basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, staff do not make prompt use of information about how groups of children are doing to ensure they make even faster progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 75 lessons or parts of lessons, including 20 jointly with the Principal or co-headteachers. An inspector also attended an assembly.
- Members of the inspection team heard pupils read and, with the Principal and co-headteachers, looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports and safeguarding materials. They considered evidence of the school's partnership work and the information provided for families.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and other staff. Inspectors talked to the former Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 81 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also spoke informally to parents and carers in the playground and at the school's weekly coffee morning, which was attended by over 100 parents and carers. A further 59 printed copies of the Parent View questionnaire were considered.
- The inspectors analysed the 54 staff questionnaires that were completed.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jenell Chetty

Additional Inspector

Martin Roberts

Additional Inspector

Janet Dinsmore

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. There are four classes in Year 1, three classes in Years 2, 3 and 4, and two classes in Years 5 and 6. In successive years the school accepted 'bulge' classes from Barnet Local Authority that is pupils who had been unable to find places at any other school. These pupils arrived late in the school year, many with limited prior education.
- Early years provision is full time in the five Reception classes. There is also a Nursery that runs part-time sessions.
- Nine in 10 pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds; this is a very high proportion. Over two thirds of pupils speak English as an additional language, many of whom are at the early stages of learning English; this proportion is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils identified as disabled or with special educational needs is well above average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, catering for autism. This has recently opened and has six children and pupils from Reception and Year 1.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- In April 2014, the school moved from its old site to a new, purpose-built building on the north-western edge of Grahame Park.
- The school is federated with Goldbeaters Primary School and shares a Principal and governing body. Together they form the Gold Star Federation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make provision in the early years outstanding by:
 - promptly using the information the school has on the skills of different groups of children to ensure they all make rapid progress in all areas of development.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The new school building is an expression of the Principal's passion to provide the very best for pupils with all its high-quality facilities and flair. Pupils very much appreciate their new surroundings, but make the point that, 'It doesn't matter about the building, it's the education you get that is important.' In this, The Orion School more than comes up to the mark.
- The culture of the school is a sheer love of excellence with no excuses looked for or offered. All staff look for the best in pupils and celebrate it. The Principal, co-headteachers and other leaders are relentlessly focused on enabling pupils to become the best they can be in all areas of learning.
- This very special culture drives the outstanding teaching and creates the ethos in which pupils flourish and behave exceedingly well. The Principal has been highly successful in galvanising the entire school community behind his vision. This was evident at the weekly coffee morning, where more than 100 parents and carers from all different ethnic groups spoke very highly of the school and its work, and said how well their children were doing.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is very strong. Leaders coach staff to improve, giving them plenty of practical advice and showing them what they mean. The federation's 'Gold Star Primary Learning' sets consistently high expectations across both schools and enables teachers to learn essential skills quickly. As one teacher commented, 'The school is a wonderful place to work and to learn from others.'
- Subject and other leaders are highly effective at driving improvement in their areas. They have a detailed understanding of how well pupils are doing and what needs to happen to get even better. They check the quality of teaching and learning in their areas rigorously and keep senior leaders fully informed about progress.
- The pupil premium is spent highly effectively on ensuring that there are no gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally (who are not eligible for support through the pupil premium). Pupils receive tuition from teachers and higher-level teaching assistants as well as being supported in taking part in different activities to enrich their experiences of school. This develops their personal skills and abilities extremely well.
- Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work, ensuring that no one falls behind. The school fosters excellent relationships with a wide range of different organisations and agencies to support pupils. Leaders make sure that discrimination is not tolerated in any shape or form.
- The vision of the school is that 'learning is a quest'. Pupils are guided in acquiring the skills they need to be successful in life as well as being given opportunities to develop their talents and follow their interests. This makes for a vibrant and broad curriculum that gives pupils wide choices and involves them as much as possible in taking an active role in their learning.
- Teachers make sure that pupils benefit from an enormous range of lunchtime and after-school clubs (67 across the federation) and visits and visitors to enhance their education. The school has close links with the nearby Royal Air Force Museum where pupils often go as part of their learning in history.
- Leaders have opened up the new National Curriculum for pupils and ensure that they apply their skills and knowledge across a wide range of subjects. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education extremely well and teaches them about justice and democracy and the full measure of British values. Pupils know about the parliamentary system and the local Member of Parliament and Barnet council members visit occasionally. This prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is spent extremely well. Pupils participate in many different sports and benefit from expert coaching. The school's 'Shine Academy' provides additional coaching for pupils who show sporting prowess. The large majority of pupils in Key Stage 2, including all those supported by the pupil premium, take part in extra sports.
- The local authority works very successfully with the school and is clearly appreciative of its support in taking on 'bulge' classes and makes use of its expertise to help others. The federation creates opportunities for the sharing of best practice and developing teachers' leadership skills.
- Leaders and governors make sure that the school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding and that they are extremely effective in ensuring pupils are kept safe. They make very thorough checks on staff and keep detailed records of their work with pupils and their families. All staff receive high-quality training in child protection matters and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school's governance is highly effective. Governors bring a wide range of expertise and experience and know where there are gaps to be filled. They have been instrumental in supporting leaders through the massive undertaking of moving the school a mile across London to its new building. Governors have

an excellent understanding of pupils' performance data and how the data compare with those for other pupils nationally. They know about the quality of teaching and the management of teachers' performance because they visit regularly and find out for themselves how well the school is doing. They make sure that any pay rises are deserved and linked to pupils' progress. They know what they would do to tackle any underperformance. Governors manage the school's budget very efficiently and ensure that leaders provide value for money in spending additional funds such as the pupil premium.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are overwhelmingly proud of their school. They are exceptionally motivated to learn. They value all that the staff do for them. They throw themselves wholeheartedly into their studies and take care to produce work of a high standard.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent both in class and around the school. They are fully aware of the school's behaviour policy and say, 'Everyone tries to keep their behaviour up.'
- Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, for example as members of the school council. They have worked with their classmates to secure additional play equipment for lunchtimes.
- Leaders can point to individuals whose behaviour has improved over time since joining the school, as there is such a clear culture of excellence promoted by all the pupils.
- Attendance has been rising rapidly this year following the appointment of an attendance officer and is now close to average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Leaders ensure that all checks are made on new staff and that the site is secure. Pupils say they feel completely safe at school, something endorsed by all parents and carers who expressed an opinion.
- Pupils know all about different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and racially motivated bullying. They take steps to inform one another and to prevent it from occurring. Pupils report that bullying is virtually non-existent.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe, including when using the internet. Visits from members of the emergency services help them to appreciate keeping safe in a range of different potentially dangerous situations.
- Pupils keep alert to safety issues and make staff and one another aware of any concerns they may have. They are involved in considering potential risks when they go on trips, including a residential visit to France.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding over time because teachers have high expectations of pupils and leaders have ensured that excellent practice occurs across the school.
- The teaching of writing is very consistent, enabling pupils to build on what they already know and make their writing increasingly sophisticated as they mature. For example, Year 6 pupils studied a letter of complaint about a trip to the cinema to identify features of complaints before writing their own letter. Year 3 pupils relished acting out a day in the life of the Cyclops, a Greek mythological figure, which included much 'eating alive' of their classmates before setting pencil to paper.
- Books show that there is a high volume of quality writing. Boys are enthusiastic about writing as well as girls. All pupils keep writing journals, many to a high standard.
- Teachers are highly effective in helping pupils to approach their tasks with confidence, especially as they are set at the right level of challenge for them.
- Pupils respond sensitively to learning and think deeply because teachers question them skilfully and do not accept their first answers; instead, they develop their understanding through probing discussion. This was observed when Year 6 pupils were ordering the seven sequences of how a fossil is formed. Pupils are also encouraged to think of their own searching questions. For example, a pupil asked how food can be digested in the international space station 'if it is just floating about'.
- Reading is taught extremely well, both by teachers and support staff. The school's programme for teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) gives pupils a secure understanding of how words are put

together and enables them to read with confidence and expression.

- Teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They have received excellent training and teachers deploy them effectively to work with groups and individuals of all abilities. Close links between teachers and support staff mean that they discuss gains in pupils' progress and what can be done to support any who are not doing so well.
- The impact of teaching on learning and achievement in mathematics is outstanding. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve mastery through solving problems and explaining their thinking. The 'maths smart academy' challenges the most able pupils to excel. A focus on technical vocabulary ensures that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not miss out on developing mathematical skills.
- Books show a high level of consistency in the quantity and quality of work across different classes in the same year group. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils' work is presented. Pupils take many opportunities to write across different subjects. For example, pupils imagined the telephone conversation between United States President Richard Nixon and astronaut Neil Armstrong on the occasion of the first moon landing in July 1969.
- Marking is very helpful to pupils and shows them how to improve their work. They consistently act upon their teachers' advice and this enables them to make rapid progress.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children join the Nursery with skills that are often well below typical levels for their age, especially in language, literacy and social and emotional development. They make good progress in the early years, particularly in developing early reading skills.
- A well-structured approach to teaching phonics helps pupils to tackle new words and spell them correctly. In the Year 1 phonics check, an above average proportion of pupils met the required standard in 2014.
- Published data give a misleading impression of pupils' achievement in 2013 and 2014 by the end of Year 2. These were the year groups that included 'bulge' classes, with large numbers of pupils from elsewhere who joined the school with limited prior education late on in the year. This had the effect of dampening attainment, even though pupils who had joined the school in Nursery as usual made outstanding progress and attained very well over time.
- The present Year 2 cohort does not include any 'bulge' classes and attainment is much higher, reflecting the outstanding education that pupils receive in Key Stage 1. Pupils are on track to reach at least average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils currently in Years 3 and 4 whose attainment was below average at the end of Year 2 have caught up rapidly and are now firmly on course to reach standards that are well above average by the end of Year 6. This is because of the outstanding teaching these pupils receive and teachers' focus on identifying exactly what they need support in to succeed.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 make outstanding progress from their different starting points. In terms of progress, the performance of these pupils is among the highest in England. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils in all year groups are on track to reach standards above those expected for their age by the end of the year. Year 6 pupils are well on course to reach high standards again in reading, writing and mathematics and to make outstanding progress over time.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 all made the progress expected nationally in reading and writing, and almost all did so in mathematics. Their attainment in mathematics and writing was similar to that of other pupils nationally who were not supported by the pupil premium, and higher in reading. This meant that they were not behind these pupils at all, and were actually ahead of them in reading. Compared with other pupils in the school, disadvantaged pupils were one term behind their classmates in mathematics and a half term behind in reading and writing.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make outstanding progress across the school because the funding is spent very effectively in helping them to do as well as they can. They also have opportunities to join clubs and learn musical instruments through the additional funding, which help to build their confidence and skills.
- The specialist resource provision for autistic children has only recently opened, so does not yet have a track record of outstanding progress over time. However, staff know the individuals very well and plan therapy that suits them. Children are learning to communicate with signs and symbols well.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the main school make at least good and often outstanding progress like their classmates. Leaders track their individual progress meticulously and ensure that they receive individual specialist support. This means that the education that they receive

meets their needs extremely well.

- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, including those new to speaking English, make outstanding progress. Around 50 different languages are spoken in the school. Pupils receive considerable support when they first join. Teachers are adept at adapting the learning to suit them, for example through providing pictures and new words that help them to follow what is happening in class.
- The most able pupils achieve extremely well. This is because teachers give them challenging work to do. There are also additional opportunities for them to excel as part of the school's 'Smart Academy'. All pupils receive intensive weekly tutoring in the areas in which they show talent, and support other pupils. This enables them to develop expertise. The most able pupils go on to reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- All pupils read widely and often. They can express themselves very fluently when discussing text. They read with expression and are not put off by unfamiliar words such as 'perambulator'. The school's 'Word Fest' celebrations, 60 days of reading events, motivate pupils and encourage them in their reading.

The early years provision

is good

- Engaging and stimulating activities motivate children to learn well. They make good progress in the early years. Each child has five daily challenges to complete in different areas of learning and this gives them a focus for the day, supporting their learning well.
- Attractive and informative displays make the classrooms inviting places for children to learn. They also benefit from well-resourced and spacious outdoor spaces. Nursery children were enjoying ordering numbered slices of wood from one to 20.
- Teaching is good and staff mainly set work at the right level for children. However, the leadership of the early years has not used performance information promptly enough to enable different groups of pupils to make rapid progress across all areas of learning. This is why provision is good rather than outstanding.
- Staff display children's 'next steps' prominently and refer to them, so that children know what they have to do to improve their learning. This is not always evident, however, in their 'learning journeys', which provide a record of their progress over time, so it is not always possible to track the gains children are making.
- The way learning is planned in the early years interests children. For example, activities on the theme of 'dinosaurs' engage children well. These included counting the spikes on a stegosaurus and making their own dinosaur models.
- Behaviour is mainly good. Just occasionally, children lose interest in Reception if they are having to wait too long to take their turn. Children are kept extremely safe and all staff ensure that levels of care are high.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. Staff work well together and maintain excellent links with parents and carers.

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	131970
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	453272

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	800
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Hinton
Principal	Chris Flathers
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 February 2010
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Fax number	020 8905 9429
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