

Alma Primary School

Alma Road, Enfield, EN3 4UQ

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are friendly and polite. They work hard and thoroughly enjoy coming to school.
- Relationships are harmonious. Pupils from very different backgrounds show high levels of respect and tolerance for one another.
- The school has developed excellent partnerships with the community. Parents are often invited into school to take part in a range of activities. The school makes good use of visitors, including teachers from other schools, to broaden the experience of pupils.
- Pupils feel safe in school because the arrangements for safeguarding are robust and there is very little bullying or anti-social behaviour. Pupils who act as school 'buddies' play an active role in maintaining a happy atmosphere.
- Children in the early years benefit from the outstanding provision in the nursery and in the Reception classes.
- Teaching is consistently at least good and some is outstanding. Teachers plan lessons which interest pupils and develop their confidence as learners. A common and systematic approach to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics has led to higher standards in these subjects since the previous inspection.
- All groups of pupils, including those who are disabled or have special education needs, make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The headteacher is a passionate advocate for the school. Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what could be improved. Detailed action plans have helped leaders ensure higher standards and consistently good teaching.
- All staff and governors are united in their mission to provide the very best for the children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure pupils make more rapid progress.
- In a small proportion of lessons, the most able pupils are not always challenged to achieve as well as they can.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the learning in all classes in the school and in a number of small groups. Most of these visits were undertaken with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors looked at pupils’ work in lessons, in books and on display around the school. They spoke to pupils formally and informally about their views of the school and listened to some pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Inspectors checked a range of school documents, including all records and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, the school development and improvement plan and the school’s own self-evaluation of its effectiveness.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, the headteacher and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents through checking the results from the school’s own surveys of parental opinion and the 15 responses to Parent View, the online survey. Inspectors also spoke to some parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in the 42 responses to the voluntary questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Sweet, Lead inspector
Joanne Coton
Alistair McKeckan

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alma Primary is a larger-than-average primary school, with a nursery where children attend full-time. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding given for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, with the largest groups being of Turkish, Somali or Bangladeshi heritage. Almost three quarters of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school's governing body manages a daily breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the achievement of pupils by :
ensuring teachers consistently provide activities which will challenge all pupils, particularly the most able, to make more rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good.

- The headteacher has assembled a strong and cohesive team. Together, they have had a significant impact on standards of behaviour and personal development in the school. The staff are proud to work at Alma Primary School and are keen to contribute to the continuing improvements that are being made. This unity of purpose has been crucial in leading the school through a period of significant change, where the numbers of pupils on roll vary dramatically from term to term.
- The arrangements for monitoring and improving teaching are a strength. There is a clear system which is supplemented by regular workshops and training for staff. This rigorous but supportive approach has led to consistently good or better teaching. Teaching and the achievement of children in the early years provision are outstanding and very well managed.
- This is a truly inclusive school which works hard to ensure that pupils have equal opportunities to learn. Rigorous and regular checks are made to ensure that all groups are making the progress they should. Prompt action is taken if pupils are identified as being in danger of underachieving. Leaders are aware, for instance, that some of the most able pupils could be challenged further and this is a priority of the monitoring programme.
- The commitment to equal opportunities extends across every subject and to the way pupils behave in school. There is virtually no name calling of any kind and very few incidents of racial harassment or bullying. In the small number of incidences recorded, staff have responded swiftly and any concerns have been dealt with.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and have a good overview of the standards achieved in their subjects. They are responsible for leading developments and supporting colleagues when necessary. Some are new to their role and are quickly gaining an oversight of the provision in their areas. The leadership of early years provision is outstanding.
- New staff, including newly qualified teachers, are quickly introduced to the procedures of the school by more experienced mentors. This has resulted in a very positive ethos, where high expectations are the norm.
- The additional funds to support disadvantaged pupils have been used to pay for additional staff, resources and training. They also support pupils undertaking extracurricular activities. As a result, pupils make progress that is similar to, and sometimes quicker than, that of other pupils in the school.
- The primary PE and sports grant is used effectively to improve the quality of physical education and to provide enrichment activities for children. For example horse-riding lessons are provided for pupils in Year 4. A sports coach is having a significant impact on the level of physical activity at break times because he has introduced a range of sporting activities which the pupils enjoy.
- The school enjoys excellent relationships with parents and is keen to involve them in the life of the school and their children's learning. Parents are invited to regular curriculum meetings which help them to understand how they can help their children learn.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of pupils and promotes pupils' social, moral and spiritual development very well. In a singing assembly, pupils discussed the lyrics of a song, highlighting the moral dilemmas involved in telling tales. Children in a Reception class were filled with a sense of awe in witnessing how cress grew. The promotion of British values is a strength across the school, with all year groups incorporating an aspect of 'Being British' within other subjects. The breakfast club effectively supports good social cohesion and provides a positive start to the day.
- The leadership team are continuing to improve the curriculum, which includes further strengthening the links between subjects. Effective planning ensures that pupils consistently practise literacy and numeracy skills throughout the curriculum. This has a significant impact on their good achievement.
- Local authority support has been good since the last inspection. The school works closely with the local authority and appreciated the brokering of a partnership arrangement with a teaching school. This has provided additional support for new teachers and a forum for sharing good practice.
- The school's leaders ensure that all safeguarding procedures for pupils are secure and well organised.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors know the school well. They are regular visitors and undertake a range of activities which contribute to their understanding of how well the school is doing. They rigorously scrutinise a range of data showing how well pupils are progressing. They also effectively challenge senior leaders to quantify the impact of a range of school spending, including the additional

funding for disadvantaged pupils and the primary sports grant.

- Governors know about the quality of teaching because they are provided with a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses and outcomes from performance management. They have implemented a pay policy which links pay awards to pupil performance for all members of staff. They have fully supported the headteacher in recruiting the best staff for the school. Governors effectively monitor safeguarding arrangements and make sure they meet current statutory obligations.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is because adults have high expectations and provide excellent role models for the pupils. The systems to promote good behaviour are clearly understood and followed by all.
- Pupils move around the school, including the corridors and staircases, with consideration for others. As a result, the school feels calm and purposeful.
- Pupils have consistently positive attitudes to learning. They take pride in their school. Books and other school equipment are very well looked after.
- Pupils work well in groups or pairs, have a highly developed sense of fair play and willingly reflect on the spiritual dimensions of life.
- Pupils are eager to learn, polite and respectful. In lessons, they are conscientious and listen attentively to their teachers and other adults. Pupils are well mannered and polite. They relish opportunities to contribute to the well-being of the school through putting themselves forward to be elected as 'buddies' or as head boy or girl. These pupils play an active role in maintaining and improving the day-to-day experiences of pupils in the school.
- School records show that there are few serious incidents of poor behaviour over time. Parents, pupils and staff agree that behaviour is well managed.
- Pupils are keen to come to school and this is reflected in the improving attendance figures which are currently close to the national average. The leadership team are persistent in following up absences and making sure that pupils and parents are aware of the importance of regular attendance.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in school because they trust the adults who work with them. Detailed risk assessments are carried out to ensure that potential hazards are avoided. The school's policies to keep pupils safe are well understood by all.
- There is a good programme of activities arranged, which contributes to the safety of the pupils. The police recently visited to talk about keeping safe on the internet during an e-safety week. Regular circle time gives pupils the opportunity to express concerns in a safe environment. Road safety is a regular topic in assemblies. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that these activities gave them confidence. They understand the different kinds of bullying and say that instances are rare and quickly dealt with. This is reflected in school records which show that only a very small number of incidents have taken place in the last 12 months.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is raising standards and increasing the rate of progress for pupils. This is because the school has high expectations of the pupils and what they will achieve.
- Strong and trusting relationships between adults and pupils contribute to the calm and positive atmosphere in lessons. There are very well established routines which ensure that time is used well and pupils know what is expected of them.
- Teachers mark pupils work regularly and clearly explain those aspects which are done well and those which could be improved. This process contributes successfully to the good progress that pupils make.
- The teaching of reading and writing is a strength. There is a clear sequence to the teaching that pupils understand. It provides them with a very secure foundation and helps them to produce work of a high quality. In a Year 6 class, for example, pupils wrote a vivid description of a character from a novel; before attempting it alone they had read a good quality description and written one together.
- Teaching of mathematics is leading to rapidly improving standards by the time pupils reach Year 6. Regular training has ensured that teachers' subject knowledge is good and that they are continuing to

improve the teaching of mathematics in line with the expectations set out in the new National Curriculum.

- Teachers and other adults use questions very well to check pupils' understanding and to encourage them to think. This is especially effective when teachers direct questions to individuals for a particular reason, such as to challenge them to explain themselves in more detail. However, occasionally, the most able are not consistently challenged to produce their best work or to work as fast as they are capable of doing.
- Learning support staff are used well to ensure that pupils make the progress they should. They work skilfully with small groups or sometimes with individuals who have special educational needs.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Younger pupils make rapid progress in reading and writing because they are effectively taught and follow a method that introduces new sounds systematically. They quickly learn about the sounds that letters make (phonics) and use this knowledge to read and spell. The majority of pupils achieve at expected levels in the national phonics check.
- Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good and often outstanding progress. This is because the adults who work with them are skilled in finding ways to communicate and help them to take full advantage of the learning opportunities on offer. Teachers also ensure that pupils acquire new vocabulary quickly. This leads to better writing, better reading and better learning in a range of subjects.
- Standards in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics were below average in 2013 and 2014. There were very few pupils who reached the higher levels. However, these statistics include a high proportion of pupils who arrived in the middle of Year 1 or Year 2. Some of these pupils had little or no English and in some cases, they had never been to school. The current pupils in Year 2 are making good progress and their attainment has risen rapidly so it is broadly average. More pupils are expected to achieve the higher levels than they did in 2013 and 2014.
- Pupils who have been with the school since the nursery or the Reception classes make consistently good progress from generally lower attainment, on entry to the school, than that typical for their age. By the time they reach Year 6, they attain standards which are broadly average.
- Although standards in Year 6 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of the year in 2014, there has been an improvement in rates of progress, and pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to achieve standards which are much closer to the national average.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is improving over time. This year, a higher proportion of the most able pupils are achieving level 5 or level 6 in mathematics and reading than in 2014.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because teaching is well matched to pupils' level of attainment and teachers ensure that pupils are made fully aware of what they need to learn and how to improve their work.
- Most activities throughout the curriculum are effectively planned to ensure pupils practise their literacy and numeracy skills. This promotes faster progress in all subjects. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs make good progress in relation to their starting points, due to the early identification of their needs and the very effective teaching they receive. They also benefit from the specific support programmes arranged by the inclusion team. This is resulting in a narrowing of the attainment gap between these pupils and other pupils in the school.
- The school values reading highly, both as a tool for learning and a source of pleasure. Books and reading are actively promoted in every area of school life. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils are confident and committed readers. They talk about the range of texts they are reading and how well they have improved. One pupil was proud to name William Shakespeare as her favourite author.
- Disadvantaged pupils make consistently good progress across both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 as a result of the additional support they receive. At Key Stage 2, they make quicker progress in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils nationally. While disadvantaged pupils were 12 months behind other pupils in mathematics in 2014, this gap is being closed in school. The pupils currently in Year 6 are attaining standards in mathematics which are much closer to the national average and are currently less than two months behind other pupils nationally. The gap is also being closed rapidly in writing and reading. Most disadvantaged pupils are making outstanding progress in these areas and achieving average standards by the time they reach year 6.
- The school carefully monitors the progress of all the pupils in the school. Pupil progress meetings are held regularly. This allows senior leaders to know how well pupils are doing throughout the year. Potential underachievement by any pupil is tackled quickly and extra support provided where necessary.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- Children in the early years greatly enjoy coming to school. The learning environment in both the nursery and the Reception classes is exceptionally stimulating and engaging. By the end of the Reception year, they are very well prepared for Year 1.
- Relationships are harmonious. Children behave extremely well and have very positive attitudes to learning. They make rapid progress from starting points which are significantly below those which are typical for their age, especially in mathematical development (number) and writing.
- Children make rapid progress in learning about the sounds that letters make. Children who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress and keep up with their peers because they are given plenty of opportunities to talk and practise what they are learning.
- Links with parents are excellent. The school provides families with a camera to record aspects of home life. Photos taken in this way provide a useful resource to encourage talking and learning as well as reinforcing the link between home and school.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff make detailed observations of what children can do. These are kept in very high quality records called 'learning journeys'. Staff use the information effectively to plan the next steps in children's learning. They also clearly show the range and quality of the activities that children undertake and the progress that they make.
- Teachers plan a range of imaginative activities for children. Often, they involve practising real-life skills, such as making a shopping list for the ingredients for a Christmas cake.
- Leadership of the early years is very strong. The experienced leader has a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and shares the headteacher's desire to continuously improve the achievement of the children without compromising on the joy of learning. Smiles and laughter are common. The children are happy and enthusiastic learners.

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	102012
Local authority	Enfield
Inspection number	453688
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	474
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Dykin
Headteacher	Helen Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 March 2013
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