

New Islington Free School

Jersey Street, Manchester M4 6HB

Inspection dates 17–18 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding
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	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Outstanding leadership and teaching in the early years results in children having a very secure foundation on which to build. From their starting points, all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, speak English as an additional language, or are identified as being disabled or having special educational needs, make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because of the outstanding quality of teaching they receive.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. Pupils have a love of learning. They demonstrate high levels of respect for the wide range of cultures within the school community, which they see as one learning family.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are using online technologies. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- The school's curriculum provides a wide breadth of experiences for pupils. It empowers pupils to learn, prepares them well for life in modern Britain and for their next stages of education.
- Attendance is high and improving strongly because of the actions leaders take to make learning exciting. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school.
- Governors' professional skills, coupled with the school's meticulous tracking of pupils' progress, allow them to analyse school performance forensically. They recognise the need to further develop the links between the governing body and middle leaders as the school continues to grow in size.
- Senior leaders are passionate and relentless in their pursuit of educational excellence. They have not allowed the barriers presented by the school's temporary buildings, or the development of its new site, to inhibit high quality provision for pupils.
- The school has a very positive reputation in the community: places are in high demand and parents are extremely supportive of what the school does to help their children succeed.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of lessons in all classes in the school. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with a senior leader of the school.
- The inspector visited all key stages with members of the school's senior leadership team to see the school at work.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, groups of pupils, three representatives of the governing body and the Department for Education's monitoring officer for the school.
- A range of documentation was examined, particularly that relating to school development planning and self-evaluation, keeping pupils safe, and pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The school's tracking of pupils' progress was checked and pupils' work in books was examined.
- The inspector took note of displays around the school and the work in the outdoor areas.
- The inspector listened to a number of pupils read and explored how children were taught about how letters in words make different sounds (phonics).
- The inspector took note of the 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), together with a larger sample of responses to the school's own questionnaires completed by parents and pupils. The inspector spoke with a number of parents attending the school's parents' evenings that took place during the inspection.
- The inspector took account of the seven responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Nixon, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- New Islington Free School opened as a single-form entry primary school in September 2013. It was set up in response to demand from the local community, with support from Manchester City Council and Manchester Grammar School, to fulfil the need for primary school places in the regeneration area of New Islington, a city centre district within Ancoats in East Manchester. The school's vision is built around an ethos of high aspirations for all, the celebration of diversity, a love of language, a special climate for learning and a determination to prepare pupils for their future lives.
- All the teaching staff in the school are qualified teachers. Currently, the school has five year groups: Reception, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 with a total of 145 pupils. The school is oversubscribed, for September 2015, there were over 70 applications for 30 places.
- Over three-quarters of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with 24 different ethnic groups represented. These figures are much higher than those seen nationally. One third of pupils speak English as an additional language; at least 16 different languages are spoken across the school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. This contrasts sharply to the school's indicator of deprivation, which places it within the 20% of areas of highest deprivation in the country. (The pupil premium is additional government funding the school receives to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in local authority care.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is close to the national average.
- This was the first full inspection of the school by Ofsted.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance further the direct contribution middle leaders make to monitoring committees so that governors benefit from their expertise and evaluative skills as the school continues to grow in size.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal and deputy headteacher demonstrate a detailed understanding of what constitutes outstanding teaching and possess excellent communication skills. Consequently, their advice and coaching result in excellent practice among the school's dedicated staff who act together as one cohesive team.
- The Principal, deputy headteacher and school business manager, who form the school's senior leadership team, 'live and breathe' the vision of excellence they hold for the school, which is shared by the staff at all levels.
- Detailed and rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress by senior leaders is exceptionally well managed through a bespoke electronic data management system. This in-house system allows leaders to overcome the challenges in tracking achievement posed by assessment without National Curriculum levels. This system, coupled with regular rigorous checks on the quality of planning and teaching and the scrutiny of pupils' work in books, means senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school. The use of evaluative reports from the Department for Education and the local authority, along with the probing challenges of senior educators who are members of the governing body, ensure that the school's assessments of the standards pupils' achieve are accurate.
- The school's development planning is detailed and based upon the findings of rigorous monitoring and careful evaluation of the school's needs. It is clearly linked to leaders' passionate aspirations to ensure continued improvement and sustained excellence as the school grows in size. Leaders also ensure that plans are not inhibited by the potential restrictions of the school's temporary accommodation. Leaders are already planning how to enhance curriculum provision through the development of an 'immersive learning space' in the new building. They are also planning extra enrichment experiences to support pupils' learning so that they are not disadvantaged during the time they are still confined to temporary classrooms.
- Middle leaders, some of whom are new to their roles, are highly effective and demonstrate the shared vision and passion for excellence in the school that characterises senior leaders. All middle leaders have high levels of skill and subject knowledge, reflecting the school's use of a rigorous recruitment process to ensure the right person is appointed for the job, as well as its provision of regular staff training opportunities. Middle leaders regularly share their expertise across the school to ensure the quality of teaching is consistently high. This is clearly seen in the teaching of physical education, where the effective use of extra sports funding allows the subject leader to work alongside teachers in all year groups to enhance their teaching of the subject. The additional funding also allows the subject leader to increase pupils' wellbeing and participation in sport through membership of local sports partnerships that give access to competition, specialist coaches and experiences such as BMX cycling at the National Cycling Centre in Manchester.
- Middle leaders make a highly effective contribution to school development planning through detailed and appropriately focused subject action plans but do not regularly contribute directly to governors' monitoring committees. Senior leaders are aware of the contribution they could make and actions are planned to enhance their links to specific committees so that governors benefit from their expertise.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced; it prepares pupils well for their next stage of education and for life in modern Britain, including having a good understanding of democracy and the rule of law. Pupils gain detailed and insightful understanding of other cultures because the curriculum is well planned and enables them to study concepts in depth using a thematic approach for subjects other than English and mathematics. Rewards such as access to 'Fun on Friday' activities, including knitting or choir, and certificates designed to celebrate personal learning goals at the heart of the school's curriculum, encourage and recognise all types of achievement. One example of this is an award presented regularly by the pupils' eco committee to recognise when someone 'does the right thing' such as picking up litter or turning off surplus lighting.
- The pupil premium is used well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive equal opportunities to succeed in the school. Use of the funding has included the provision of additional specialist staff to develop pupils' reading skills, and also enrichment activities including those that cater for the most able and activities such as piano lessons. Leaders and governors track the impact of additional provision through closely monitoring the progress of disadvantaged pupils to ensure the funding has the desired impact on learning.
- The school's relationships with the community are excellent. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise the quality of teaching and leadership in the school. For example, a number of parents spoken with at a parents' evening taking place during the inspection commented that they found it difficult to get their children to leave the school at the end of the day because they enjoyed it so much. Other parents were very keen to comment about the positive impact the teachers and leaders had on their

children's progress in learning. A very small minority of parents share leaders' and governors' frustrations that the school has not moved into its new permanent home but recognise that this is due to circumstances beyond the school's control. The school communicates very effectively with parents through a variety of means including regular newsletters, its website and SMS text services. Additionally, the school is establishing itself quickly within the local community through the rapid development of links to local businesses and local police officers, who visit regularly.

- This is an inclusive school where pupils from a rich variety of cultures, races, and faiths, work together as one cohesive learning family to achieve highly. Pupils receive excellent spiritual, moral and social education. The core values of respect and tolerance for different faiths, cultures and lifestyles are embedded and modelled by all staff and pupils alike. Leaders seize every opportunity to develop pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures, for example through the celebration of Chinese New Year and the study of Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism and Islam. Activities such as mock elections help pupils to develop their understanding of British values and, in turn, help to counter the threats associated with extremism and radicalisation.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and all pupils are prepared well for their next stages of education and for life in modern Britain, including having a good understanding of democracy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance of the school is outstanding. Governors, some of whom are parents of pupils at the school, share a common vision with leaders and all staff to provide the best education possible for the pupils attending New Islington Free School. They have a deep understanding of its strengths, including the quality of teaching, and its relative weaknesses. This is because they show deep interest in the school's performance and rigorously analyse the information they receive from leaders and other external professionals.
 - Governors regularly visit the school and draw upon their own professional skills to check the accuracy of the information they receive. They provide effective support to school leaders to help them address the increasing challenges they face as the school grows in size and prepares to move to a new site.
 - Governors are fully involved in developing the school's improvement plan. They regularly check that the actions it contains are having the desired impact through rigorous and robust monitoring and challenge levelled at senior leaders. Governors are aware of the impact that additional funding is having on disadvantaged pupils and pupils' participation in sport because of the effectiveness of their monitoring committees.
 - Governors ensure that the school's performance management procedures are rigorous and that they are robustly applied, including by ensuring that teachers' pay awards are directly linked to pupils' progress. Governors clearly demonstrate high expectation of all staff through challenging targets that, for teachers, are linked to the school development plan, the national *Teachers Standards* and pupils' achievement. Governors are fully aware of the procedures in place to tackle underperformance should this ever occur.
 - Governors have a clear and deep understanding of their role. They have taken clear decisions to ensure the school meets their vision of educational excellence, including through the introduction of a thematic international primary curriculum.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils behave impeccably around school. They are calm and ordered in moving purposefully from class to class and in queues at lunchtime.
- Pupils behave well in class and demonstrate a love of learning. They are keen to participate in debates; they show great respect for the views of others and are happy to take risks because of the nurturing environments teachers have established.
- Pupils listen intently to instructions and act upon directions immediately because of well-established and consistent routines. Consequently, they waste little learning time moving between activities.
- Pupils from all year groups demonstrate great pride in their learning and are keen to share what they are doing with visitors. One pupil in Reception gave the inspector a guided tour of the outdoor provision while other pupils in Key Stage 1 displayed great eagerness to show and explain the characteristics and key points of the landscapes they had created for a project involving stop frame animations. One pupil took great pains to introduce the inspector to a character in their 'Star Wars' themed diorama while also

pointing out the earth on the distant horizon.

- Pupils show great respect for adults and each other around the school and are always willing to help. This is particularly the case for pupils who are new to the school or who find learning English as an additional language difficult. Peers who are more proficient in their home language or who have been in school longer are always willing to help translate or make them welcome so that they can achieve. One pupil explained that 'the school is one big family' to which he was 'proud to be a member.'
- Pupils' attendance levels have risen rapidly and are above the national average. Any absenteeism is rigorously pursued and support is provided, or appropriate action is taken. Pupils whom the inspector spoke with said 'we love coming to school because we learn lots and it is fun,' a viewpoint shared by many parents.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and the different forms it can take, including online-bullying and that related to race and gender, which they perceive as being different from falling out with friends. They say that bullying is extremely rare and any naughtiness is dealt with quickly and effectively by teachers and other staff. School records show that bullying is extremely rare and that school leaders have procedures in place to closely monitor behaviour to identify and effectively follow up with parents any incidents that may occur.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The school has robust policies in place that are consistently applied to ensure all staff and visitors are checked for their suitability to work or visit the school.
- The school's site is managed well. The security officer ensures that pupils and their families remain safe, including during the busy times when there is a lot of traffic movement.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school. They are able to clearly articulate how they would stay safe in a variety of situations such as when crossing the road, while they are online, or when using the internet. This is because the teaching of safety is well integrated into the curriculum. Pupils are able to explain about the dangers of the online world because the school has comprehensive e- safety training led by teachers who have all completed specialist training.
- Pastoral care for pupils is outstanding. Pupils feel confident to approach any member of staff if they have a problem. The school has rigorous and robust procedures for dealing with more serious issues sensitively and swiftly; it follows closely all guidance relating to child protection to ensure pupils are safe.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is commonly outstanding and never less than good; consequently, pupils are highly motivated to participate in learning and make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught systematically throughout the school by teachers who demonstrate high levels of subject knowledge and skill. Technology is used highly effectively to stimulate learning and celebrate success. Teachers make inspirational use of pupils' own knowledge and skills in getting them to act as individual tutors for classmates. This is particularly common in mathematics. As a result of excellent teaching, pupils from all groups, including those with special educational needs and the most able, develop deep understanding of concepts and confidently give clear explanations of how to undertake different types of calculations.
- All teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate a deep understanding of the different strategies that can be used to help children who speak English as a second language to succeed in school. This knowledge is used very well to plan activities that remove the barriers to learning presented by a new language while also giving appropriate challenge to match pupils' abilities. Consequently, pupils who speak English as an additional language make outstanding progress
- All teachers and teaching assistants constantly demonstrate high expectations of pupils. Teachers often set challenges that require pupils to show resilience for extended periods of learning and use the skills they have been learning independently to reach expected outcomes. This was seen in the Reception class when one pupil realised that they could tell the time in hours and then continued working on the task for a period of time to check that they had 'got it'. Teachers use technical language frequently and expect pupils to use the same.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge, particularly in English, allows them to use questions to good effect to probe children's understanding. Pupils are frequently asked to explain their thinking or the reasons behind their answers. This allows teachers to assess their grasp of concepts while also consolidating pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers' highly positive relationship with their classes nurtures pupils'

confidence to take risks or make mistakes from which they learn.

- Teachers enhance pupils' abilities to apply the skills they have been taught in English and mathematics by cleverly weaving them into exciting tasks in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 3 were asked to write witness statements that conveyed facts and opinions about the character of Mr Big Bad Wolf in the case of the *Three Little Pigs*. The outcomes were so convincing that Mr Big Bad Wolf was acquitted of all charges by a jury made up of pupils during his mock crown court trial.
- Teachers' marking and feedback, including verbal feedback, is of a consistently high standard and used effectively to guide pupils to improve their work and achieve high standards. Homework is given regularly and used effectively across the school to enhance the learning that is happening in class. Pupils are keen to share their homework; for example, pupils from different cultures were confident to explain their faith beliefs relating to peace in an assembly.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Accurate and rigorous assessments show that few children enter the school securely demonstrating the knowledge and skills expected for their chronological age. Their skills in communication, language, literacy and number are weak when they enter the school. By the time they leave Reception, all groups of children, including those who are disadvantaged, speak English as an additional language or who are identified as having special educational needs or disabilities, make outstanding progress to reach high levels of achievement. Consequently at the end of Reception in 2014, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development was higher than that seen nationally. Children's work and externally validated accurate assessments show that this standard is being maintained.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, nearly all pupils in all groups make better progress than that which is expected of them in mathematics, reading and writing. In 2014, the first year the school undertook statutory assessments, pupils who had been at the school for less than one year made rapid progress from their starting points to reach levels of attainment that were generally in line with those seen nationally in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing was similar to that seen in reading and mathematics but pupils' lower starting points resulted in lower levels of attainment. School leaders have taken effective actions resulting in rapid improvements in pupils' writing. The standard they are now working at is in line with that seen nationally in 2014.
- The rapid rates of progress, coupled with the increasing length of time pupils have been attending the school, is having rapid positive impact on the proportions of pupils who reach the expected and above expected levels of attainment. Current school assessments, that have been externally validated, show rapidly increasing proportions of pupils have made up lost ground to achieve at least the standards expected in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1. These proportions exceed those seen nationally for the expected and the highest levels of attainment in reading and mathematics and are in line with the national picture for writing.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected levels of attainment in the Year 1 phonics check is well above that seen nationally due to the systematic and high quality teaching of phonic skills. Teachers, teaching assistants and pupils themselves frequently encourage other pupils to apply their phonic skills during lessons in other subjects to help identify and pronounce unfamiliar words. Consequently, pupils develop their phonic skills rapidly and quickly gain confidence in reading.
- In Key Stage 2 the progress of all groups of pupils, including those identified as having special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, is outstanding. Pupils' work seen in their books and the school's own detailed and accurate tracking of pupils' attainment and progress show that the small gaps between boys' and girls' attainment seen at the end of Key Stage 1 are closing quickly. This is particularly the case in mathematics where nearly all pupils are working at age-related expectations. Increasing numbers of pupils exceed age related expectations because of the high quality teaching they receive.
- The small number of pupils identified as being disadvantaged make outstanding progress to close the gap with their peers in school and nationally. Older disadvantaged pupils in the school achieve better than their peers.
- The most able pupils in school are well-supported and achieve highly. In mathematics, and in some English lessons, pupils move year groups so that they receive the best level of challenge that matches their abilities. Pupils who are the most able are monitored carefully by leaders and the governing body's pupils' progress review group to ensure they achieve the best they can. They are offered additional support as appropriate to ensure they continue their high rates of progress. Consequently, the most able pupils often work at levels above those that are expected for their age. One example of this is where a group of Year 3 pupils demonstrated secure knowledge of equivalence by confidently undertaking difficult

and rapid calculations involving proper fractions, improper fractions and mixed numbers and then explaining their workings to peers in an older year group.

- Pupils read widely and often and make outstanding progress in developing their levels of reading comprehension because of the highly effective teaching of phonics and the way that reading skills are systematically taught during English and consolidated throughout other subject areas. Pupils have a genuine love of books as shown by their eager engagement with the school's recent 'radical reading' competition and are clear in their reasons for the enjoyment of specific genres and authors.
- The few pupils who are identified as being disabled or having special educational needs make outstanding progress. Pupils receive high quality support from teachers and teaching assistants who have been trained to deliver specialist programmes which rapidly develop reading and writing skills. After-school learning clubs, such as 'Mathemagicians' and 'Word Wizards,' impact positively on pupils' progress and their confidence in applying their skills.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The leadership and management of the early years are outstanding. The early years staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of what is required to ensure children entering the early years make the best possible start to their education. They share a clear passion for excellence and put their skills into practice so that children settle quickly to learn extremely well.
- Teaching in the early years is outstanding and leads to outstanding progress for children, many of whom start school with levels of knowledge and skill below those typical for their age. Teachers use their meticulous assessments and evaluations of pupils' learning and information received from parents and carers about children's current experiences and interests to plan activities that interest and engage them in learning.
- Behaviour and safety in the early years are outstanding. The environment is safe and well supervised. Children move safely and sensibly around the school and from one activity to another. They demonstrate impeccable manners and work collaboratively together to help each other succeed, often concentrating for extended periods. Children are proud of their classroom and are excited to show visitors round and share and celebrate what they have been learning. Teachers are very successful in developing children's inquisitiveness and reflective thinking. This was demonstrated by children's eagerness to investigate and quiz the inspector about his visit!
- Children are provided with a stimulating environment in which to learn. Displays are colourful and all activities are easily accessible by children. The school has limited outdoor space at its current temporary location. Teachers, however, make excellent use of what space there is to provide free access to a range of interesting activities. Activities, including those outdoors, such as a performance space and sand and water play contribute strongly to the development of communication and language skills and children's physical development.

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	139598
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	450105

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maurice Watkins CBE
Headteacher	George Bulman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0161 205 4733
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	hello@newislingtonschool.com

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