

Alma Primary

Moss Hall Grove, Finchley, N12 8PE

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders have been successful in developing teaching so that it is good. As a result, pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of children leaving the Reception year with a good level of development is higher than the national average. Many pupils also exceed this level. They are well prepared for Year 1 where their good achievement continues.
- Teachers know individual pupils well. They ask pupils searching questions and use evidence about pupils' achievement to plan effective lessons.
- Leaders' and governors' work to promote pupils' safety and well-being is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They treat one another with kindness and respect. Their enjoyment of school leads to high attendance.
- Leaders and governors promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education exceptionally well.
- Governors use their extensive skills and effective procedures to hold school leaders closely to account and plan well for the future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Middle leaders responsible for subjects are developing the skills necessary to make a more effective contribution to raising achievement even further.
- In some lessons across the curriculum, teachers do not provide precise enough advice to help all pupils rapidly improve their work. They do not always use their accurate knowledge of pupils' abilities to strengthen or extend pupils' understanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited seven lessons covering a range of subjects, most jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the joint Chairs of the Governing Body and with four other governors.
- Discussions were also held with middle leaders. Telephone discussions were held with some external partners who provided external views of the school's work.
- The inspector examined safeguarding records and policies, together with documents related to the behaviour and safety of pupils.
- The inspector observed pupils during play and the lunch break, and heard some of them read. A scrutiny of pupils' work was conducted during visits to classrooms.
- The inspection considered the 12 responses to the staff questionnaire and 63 responses to the online survey, Parent View. The lead inspector also spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.
- The inspector scrutinised the school's records related to monitoring the quality of teaching and checking on the progress of pupils. He looked at records of governing body meetings and records of external views of the work of the school.

Inspection team

Andrew Wright, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alma Primary School is a free primary school of a Jewish religious character. It opened in September 2013. At the time of the inspection it was much smaller than the average primary school with two classes, one in the Reception year and one in Year 1. The school currently occupies a temporary site in West Finchley. In September 2015, the school intends to relocate to another temporary site within the premises of an existing secondary school in East Finchley while work on the proposed permanent site is completed.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding is extremely low.
- The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic heritage is broadly average. A much lower-than-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- The school currently does not include any pupils who may be assessed against the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A Section 48 inspection of religious education took place in February 2015.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club, both of which are managed by the governing body.
- The headteacher serves on the Local Children's Safeguarding Board of Barnet local authority as the free schools' representative.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the skills of middle leaders responsible for subjects so that they demonstrate a very strong impact on raising standards in this growing school.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by:
 - providing advice to pupils in all subjects which helps them understand precisely what is good about their work and how they can make it even better
 - re-shaping lessons across the curriculum as soon as teachers identify where pupils need more help to understand and where others are ready for even more challenging work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher communicates a determined drive for excellence and strong values. He has been successful in leading the development of the school since it opened so that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are good. Staff and pupils are motivated by his leadership.
- Parents have confidence in leaders and are inspired to contribute significantly to the life of the school. Views expressed by parents who spoke to inspectors and through Parent View indicate their overwhelming appreciation of the positive impact of leaders and governors.
- Leaders and governors use a wide range of evidence to evaluate the school's effectiveness. As a result, their views are accurate. This enables leaders to determine appropriate plans for further improvements which they keep under thorough and regular review.
- Senior leaders collect information about pupils' achievement systematically and regularly. They also check effectively on the impact teachers make on pupils' learning. They use this effectively to manage the performance of staff and decide when pupils require additional help. Teachers and support staff receive appropriate and extensive training which is sharply focused on what needs to improve further.
- Middle leaders responsible for leading subjects check up on standards regularly. They demonstrate good subject knowledge and set clear priorities for improvement. However, they do not always focused sharply enough on pupils' achievement when checking on the impact of their work. These leaders are still developing their skills and senior leaders are giving them suitable means of doing so.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. Pupils are given excellent opportunities to reflect on the moral dimensions of their actions. They benefit from activities which allow them to learn how people from cultures other than their own choose to live. For example, pupils in Year 1 recently created a drama based on an Islamic story to present to its author.
- The school's focus on kindness, inclusion and the quest for understanding is well communicated and upheld by leaders. Pupils recently created their own parties to vote for in an imaginary general election. Leaders ensure pupils understand that they have choices and rights in ways which are accessible, given their age and level of development. This is preparing them well for their future lives in Britain.
- The broad and balanced curriculum is carefully planned to help pupils challenge stereotypes. For instance, opportunities to learn about the contribution of both men and women to the development of culture, arts and science are included in curriculum plans.
- Leaders manage and plan the use of the very small amount of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils well. Primary sports funding has been used to develop the skills of staff and pupils in a range of sports. Plans to introduce a wider range of after-school sporting activities when the school moves to its new site are in place.
- The school's safeguarding measures are robust and well monitored by both leaders and governors. Leaders have been very effective in ensuring discriminatory behaviour is prevented and that there is equality of opportunity for all who attend the school.
- The breakfast club and the after-school care, managed by leaders and governors, provide pupils with stimulating activities, healthy food and a caring atmosphere.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors gather a broad range of information about the school on which to base their views. They possess a wide range of skills which allows them to use this information to challenge leaders well. They ask searching questions which hold leaders closely to account.
 - The structure of their committees has been well considered. It enables governors to meet the challenges of a growing school, provides opportunities for them to develop their skills further, and helps them plan for succession.
 - Governors understand how their school's performance compares with others. They check up on the school's safeguarding procedures regularly and thoroughly. Governors keep a close eye on how funding is spent. They make sure staff only get a pay rise if their impact on securing positive outcomes for pupils has been significant.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils want to live up to the high expectations of behaviour of the school. Teachers make sure pupils understand why they should behave well. This helps them to be considerate of,

and kind to, others when choosing how to behave when they play outside.

- Pupils behave well in lessons and enjoy working together. However, occasionally teachers need to skilfully manage the behaviour of some pupils to retain their concentration.
- Leaders have had no need to record any instances of bullying or other discriminatory behaviour. Teachers make sure pupils are prepared to deal with different types of bullying in a way which is appropriate for their age. Leaders have also ensured there is a clear process for dealing with any incidents, should they occur.
- There is no evidence of poor behaviour linked to prejudice of any kind because of the success with which the school upholds and teaches its inclusive values. There have been no exclusions since the school opened.
- Parents agree that the behaviour of pupils is good. They say that their children enjoy coming to school and thrive on the high expectations of and care provided by staff. This is a key reason why attendance at the school is high and well above national averages.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The curriculum provides a rich and very effective range of opportunities to help pupils learn to make choices with safety in mind. This is especially true of the work done to help pupils stay safe when using the internet.
- Leaders and governors maintain thorough, regular and detailed checks on all aspects of safety, both on the school site and when pupils go out of school. Plans for relocation of the school include careful consideration of safety aspects. The school site is protected by additional security measures at all times.
- The headteacher is very well informed about current safeguarding matters. He ensures all staff are trained in identifying any signs of abuse or discriminatory behaviour. He also makes sure that staff understand and implement agreed safeguarding policies.
- Procedures to check the suitability of all adults who work with children meet requirements. Records are kept meticulously and managed excellently.
- Parents feel confident that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils say they feel safe and know how to get help if they need it.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is consistently good. Training provided for teachers and support staff has improved their skills so that they provide lessons which result in good pupil achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. It is not outstanding because teachers sometimes do not immediately adapt lessons well enough for all pupils, especially in the wider curriculum. As a result, some less able learners who need more help to understand, and some more able pupils who show they are ready for greater challenge, do not always make outstanding progress.
- Reading is taught very well. Teachers and support staff use a systematic approach which focuses on key skills and ensures pupils are taught these as soon as they are ready. The wide range of opportunities teachers provide for pupils to read widely and often in many subjects promotes achievement well.
- Teachers expect pupils to write for a wide range of purposes. They are effective in helping pupils learn to use the features of different types of writing. For example, pupils in Year 1 are able to write about the human brain using poetry.
- When teaching mathematical skills, teachers use effective questioning to help pupils to use accurate vocabulary. Teachers use practical resources imaginatively to secure good progress. Displays include examples of good work by pupils which motivates the more able and helps others to remember important learning.
- Pupils learn Hebrew as a modern foreign language as soon as they enter the school and this is taught well. An effective balance of reading and speaking helps pupils gain confidence in experimenting with language.
- Pupils are taught computing skills and e-safety well through dedicated lessons and by application of these skills across the curriculum.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught well. This secures their good achievement. Effective planning and good communication between teachers and support staff ensure that the needs of these pupils are identified promptly and extra help provided.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly with comments which are helpful and constructive. However, some comments, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics, give praise without explaining

why. Comments occasionally lack sufficient precision so pupils are unclear about how to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the Reception year with skills which are broadly typical for their age. Consistently good teaching, which continues in Year 1, enables pupils to sustain good progress from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Most-able pupils make good progress so that many exceed a good level of development by the end of the Reception year and build further on this in Year 1. Achievement is not outstanding because some pupils do not make the very rapid progress necessary for them to reach these higher levels in all areas of learning.
- The small proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs make the same good progress as other pupils, given their starting points. Some do even better than this because their needs the views of specialist professionals are sought and acted upon when deciding on appropriate additional help for them.
- There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language but those who do make at least the same rate of progress as others in the school.
- Pupils learn how to read quickly and securely in the Reception year. They learn phonics (the sounds that letters make) systematically and build quickly on prior learning. The proportion of pupils on track to achieve the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average in 2014, according to the school's own evidence.
- Until very recently none of those on the school roll were eligible to the additional funding which is provided for disadvantaged pupils. The proportion who were entitled to this funding was still extremely low at the time of the inspection. Initial evidence provided by school leaders indicates that those entitled to this funding have made a good start to their time at the school.

The early years provision is good

- Children make good progress through the Reception year from their individual starting points. In 2014 a higher proportion of children achieved a good level of development in each area of learning than that seen nationally. Similarly, the proportion exceeding this good level was above national averages. Evidence from the current year indicates that achievement has improved further.
- Some variations remain in the proportions expected to exceed a good level of development in different areas of learning. Leaders are aware of these variations and their plans for further improvements are sharply focused on tackling these.
- Children are intrigued by the wide range of activities on offer to them, both indoors and outdoors. Themes which change regularly are effective in engaging their curiosity. Advice from adults and carefully considered visual guidance helps children understand how to explore the setting and practice their emerging skills.
- Adults communicate effectively with one another and with children, providing encouragement and asking stimulating questions which help children think more deeply. Well-chosen training has developed their skills further in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, so that this is now good and prepares children well for Year 1.
- Children behave well. The small proportion of pupils who are less able to manage their feelings and behaviour are identified quickly and receive sensitive, effective support.
- Statutory requirements for checking the safety of the setting are met. Parents are confident about the work of staff in the setting to keep children safe.
- School leaders have ensured good teaching leads to good achievement for children. The Reception year teacher has developed her knowledge of early education rapidly. As a result, she is able to identify effective priorities for improvements. For example, when she noticed that children were not demonstrating sufficient evidence of being imaginative, she broadened the range of reading and drama activities on offer. Consequently, children began to make more rapid progress in this area of learning.

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	139562
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	450277

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	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Joint Chairs	Natalie Grazin and David Steadman
Headteacher	Marc Shoffren
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	02083439988
Email address	office@almaprimary.org

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