

Rathfern Primary School

Rathfern Road, Catford, London SE6 4NL

Inspection dates

8–9 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher ensures that her high expectations for equality of opportunity and achievement are shared and upheld by all.
- Senior and middle leaders are effective in ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. As a result, outcomes for pupils have improved since the last inspection so that they are now outstanding.
- Teachers use very accurate assessments to plan effective, interesting lessons. They make sure pupils receive precise guidance to help them make progress.
- Teachers and support staff use questioning very effectively to help deepen pupils' understanding and correct misconceptions. Pupils are taught how to ask searching questions for themselves.
- Teachers and support staff demonstrate excellent subject knowledge across the rich curriculum. They also understand how children learn and use this to ensure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed.
- Leaders and governors have used additional funding for disadvantaged pupils very well. As a result, their attainment by the end of Year 6 is better than that of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They understand how to behave well and why it is important to do so. Pupils continue to uphold high standards of behaviour even when they are less closely supervised by adults.
- The outstanding provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. It prepares them exceptionally well for their future lives as British citizens.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding are effective and consistently well implemented by all staff.
- Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and express confidence in its leadership.
- Governors use a deep and thorough understanding of the work of the school to challenge leaders effectively.
- The early years leader ensures that parents are involved with pupils' learning from the outset. She has taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for children so that they are very well prepared for Year 1, whatever their starting points.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that a greater number of the most-able pupils attain the highest levels by enriching the curriculum even further in mathematics and science.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. She ensures that the whole school community shares her uncompromising commitment to equal opportunities and inclusion. She has a passionate commitment to her own continued learning and provides a superb role model for staff and pupils alike. As a result, pupils benefit from highly skilled teaching and make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development.
 - Senior and middle leaders focus relentlessly on learning and assessment when planning for improvement. They set challenging timescales and ambitious measures of success. Leaders examine information about pupils' achievements in great detail. Their evaluations are accurate and skilfully used to check that actions are effective. Leaders are respected beyond the bounds of their own school. They offer highly regarded professional support and training to a number of other schools.
 - The systems in place to manage the performance of teachers and plan further training are rigorous. Leaders ensure that an outstanding quality of teaching is maintained when staff changes are necessary. They provide excellent guidance and support for teachers new to the profession. This ensures that they live up to the high standards expected of them.
 - Leaders and governors use the additional funding for sport effectively. They ensure that pupils benefit from expert coaching in a range of sports. There has been a particular focus on the improvement of skills in gymnastics and increasing participation of younger pupils in sports activities outside the school day.
 - The pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively to support their development and ensure that they enjoy an equal opportunity to succeed. Senior leaders and governors check on the impact of this support rigorously. They are quick to make the necessary changes if any actions prove less successful. As a result, disadvantaged pupils flourish in their learning and personal development. They achieve better than other pupils nationally.
 - The curriculum inspires and motivates pupils to see learning as enjoyable and meaningful. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge but also understand how children learn best. Throughout the curriculum there is a strong emphasis on making sure pupils establish a deep understanding of key skills. Pupils are also taught to question, challenge and take chances in their learning. This develops them into resilient, reflective individuals. However, the most-able pupils are not always provided with opportunities to explore more complex ideas in mathematics and science to the extent they are capable of.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The strong moral purpose exemplified by the staff permeates the whole culture of the school. Pupils develop a global perspective on moral and cultural issues because of the wide range of links and resources which are available to them. For example, pupils have well-established links with a school in South Africa which they use to reflect on rights and responsibilities. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives in Britain. They learn to understand the principles behind modern British values as well as how to apply them to their own lives.
 - Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative of the school's leaders. They believe that the school enables their children to thrive and learn in a safe, supportive environment. Some parents willingly travel a long distance each day so that their children can continue to attend the school.
 - The local authority provides occasional verification of the school's own evaluations and supports the school with some of its training needs. Governors are particularly appreciative of the training and support the local authority provides them with.
- **The governance of the school**
- Governors review their own roles and responsibilities regularly and rigorously. They work in pairs, each looking at one of the four core values the school has chosen to stand for. This, alongside the more formal work of the governing body, provides a strong, effective structure which governors use to hold leaders closely to account. Governors question the school's leaders effectively because they can understand a wide range of information about pupils' outcomes. They ensure that funding is spent wisely and that teachers' pay progression depends on how effective they are.
 - Governors carry out a suitable range of checks to ensure that their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding are met. They sustain good communications with parents and keep their own safeguarding training under review so that they continue to possess a well-informed, current view of safeguarding issues.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures meet statutory requirements and leaders ensure that all the necessary training is carried out. Leaders seek the views of parents when considering the approach to be taken to training on sensitive issues such as female genital mutilation. Staff understand the safeguarding policies and implement them consistently.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers and pupils treat one another with mutual respect. Teachers expect pupils to work hard. They devote time and effort to understanding how each pupil learns best. Teachers use their extensive, accurate knowledge of pupils to plan and teach very effective, interesting lessons. This results in outstanding outcomes for pupils.
- Teachers make sure pupils develop a deep understanding of key ideas and skills. They create the right conditions to ensure that pupils feel comfortable when trying challenging work and are resilient to failure. One pupil told inspectors, 'fail stands for first attempt in learning'.
- Pupils are provided with extensive, straightforward guidance and information which enables them to know how well they are doing and how they can improve. Teachers and support staff use clear, forensic questioning to check pupils' understanding and promptly address their misconceptions. They also ask questions to help pupils think more deeply about concepts and issues. This enables pupils to think of their own effective questions. For example, pupils in Year 5 wanted to know how many African countries currently have democratic governments as part of a geography project.
- Reading and writing are taught very effectively across the whole school. Pupils learn to consider the motives and personalities of characters in books they are reading. They write for a wide range of purposes but also learn to enjoy writing for pleasure. Teachers provide an effective balance of guidance to help pupils improve both the content and the structure of their writing. Speaking and listening are used well to prepare pupils to write. As the headteacher herself puts it, 'if they can't say it they are never going to be able to write it'.
- In mathematics, a consistent, systematic approach to the teaching of key skills results in excellent progress for pupils from all starting points. The most-able have the necessary enthusiasm to tackle and benefit from an even wider range of mathematical investigations and concepts than those currently on offer.
- Support staff are also very knowledgeable about each individual pupil. Communications between support staff and teachers about pupils' learning are strong. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well supported. This enables them to become resilient and resourceful in overcoming barriers to their learning and personal development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils learn to be good learners, as the school puts it. They enjoy working hard and trying their best. They look after one another, their books and equipment well. Pupils learn to become active, reflective participants in their community as a result of the wide range of opportunities provided by the school.
- Pupils learn how to reduce risks to themselves in their everyday lives, including when using the internet. They are taught simple but effective strategies to help them evaluate risks for themselves. Even the youngest children could be seen applying these strategies during the inspection.
- Pupils celebrate and thrive on the diversity of the school community and they learn to appreciate one another's views and beliefs. New pupils feel welcome and safe as a result.
- Pupils are given effective guidance and information to help them make healthy choices. For example, younger pupils can explain what a balanced meal might consist of. Older pupils can use scientific names to identify muscle groups they need to warm up before beginning physical exercise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils behave impeccably in and out of lessons because they know why this is important. They also understand how their excellent behaviour contributes to the success they experience in learning.

- Pupils respect one another, play safely together and show consideration for the views of others. Bullying and other forms of discriminatory behaviour are very rare. Pupils who have found it hard to manage their own behaviour at their previous schools usually make a success of this at Rathfern.
- Pupils say that they are very rarely interrupted from getting on with their work by poor behaviour. When this does happen, teachers adopt a very effective reflective approach to supporting pupils. Records show that pupils seldom make the same mistake with their behaviour twice as a result of this.
- When pupils are less closely supervised by adults they continue to maintain excellent standards of behaviour and good manners.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved steadily since the last inspection. Attendance is now above the national average. Leaders ensure that pupils from all groups attend well.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Outcomes for pupils have continued to improve since the last inspection and are now outstanding. A significantly higher proportion of pupils meet and exceed the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics than is seen nationally at the end of Key Stage 2. The effective action taken by senior leaders and governors has ensured that pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have ensured that gaps between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally have been closed. In 2015 these pupils did better than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. They did better than their peers in school in reading, but not quite as well in writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of most-able pupils who attain at a higher than expected level at Key Stage 2 is well above the national average. Nearly all pupils with higher starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 2 make at least expected progress, and many exceed this, especially in writing.
- The relentless focus on assessment and development of speaking and listening ensures that pupils make outstanding progress in developing their early reading skills in the early years and Year 1. Nearly all reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1. The few who need to catch up have done so by the end of Year 2.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress from their starting points. The proportion exceeding expected progress in Key Stage 2 in 2015 was well above the national average. Every pupil exceeded expected progress from the lower starting points in reading and writing.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make outstanding progress in response to the close attention teachers pay to the starting points and learning needs of individuals. Some pupils arrive at the school with a very limited knowledge of English but quickly catch up. This is due to the emphasis placed by teachers on modelling accurate spoken English. It is also as a result of the exceptionally positive attitudes of pupils to learning.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Outcomes for children by the end of the early years have improved since the last inspection. Children enter with a wide range of starting points but, for most, they are broadly typical of their age. Children make excellent progress in all areas of learning so that the proportion attaining a good level of development by the end of the Reception year is well above the national average. The proportion of children who exceed a good level of development is increasing. Children are exceptionally well prepared to move on to Year 1.
- The early years leader has taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching. She ensures that teachers retain a sharp focus on the starting points of children in reading, writing and mathematics. She checks that they plan interesting, accessible activities both indoors and outdoors. There is a particularly strong emphasis on developing children's use of speech and helping them to persevere when faced with challenging tasks.
- Children benefit from a wide range of carefully considered activities and events which help them to understand the core values of the school from an early age and make rapid progress in their personal development. The use of a forest school strengthens this further.
- The views of children and parents are taken into account by the early years leader when planning improvements. Parents spoken to appreciate the opportunity to express their views and value the information they receive about their child's learning.

- The setting is maintained well and provides a safe learning environment. Children learn to evaluate risks for themselves.
- Children live up to the high expectations of behaviour set by members of staff. They share resources politely and play together in a kind and safe manner.

School details

Unique reference number	100700
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10001241

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	513
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Serena Brown
Headteacher	Naheeda Maharasingam
Telephone number	020 8690 3759
Website	www.rathfern.lewisham.sch.uk
Email address	Headteacher@rathfern.lewisham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 March 2011

Information about this school

- Rathfern Primary School is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. It has two classes in most year groups and three classes in Years 3 and 4.
- Pupils attend the nursery on a part-time basis. The Reception classes are full-time.
- Just under half of pupils speak English as an additional language. Most pupils are of a minority ethnic heritage. The largest group is that represented by pupils of a Black or Black British African or Caribbean heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is roughly double the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding which supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority.
- One pupil attends another school in the control of the local authority which offers specialist support.
- The governing body controls a breakfast club and an after-school care club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning during a tour of the school and in longer observations in 12 lessons. Some of these observations and the tour were conducted with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The inspection team conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work in English and mathematics. They also considered the school's own information about outcomes for pupils.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, staff with leadership responsibilities, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 2.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of governing body meetings, records of leaders' work related to managing the performance of teachers, and records related to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of 31 parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors spoke to parents at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

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Jenell Chetty	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
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